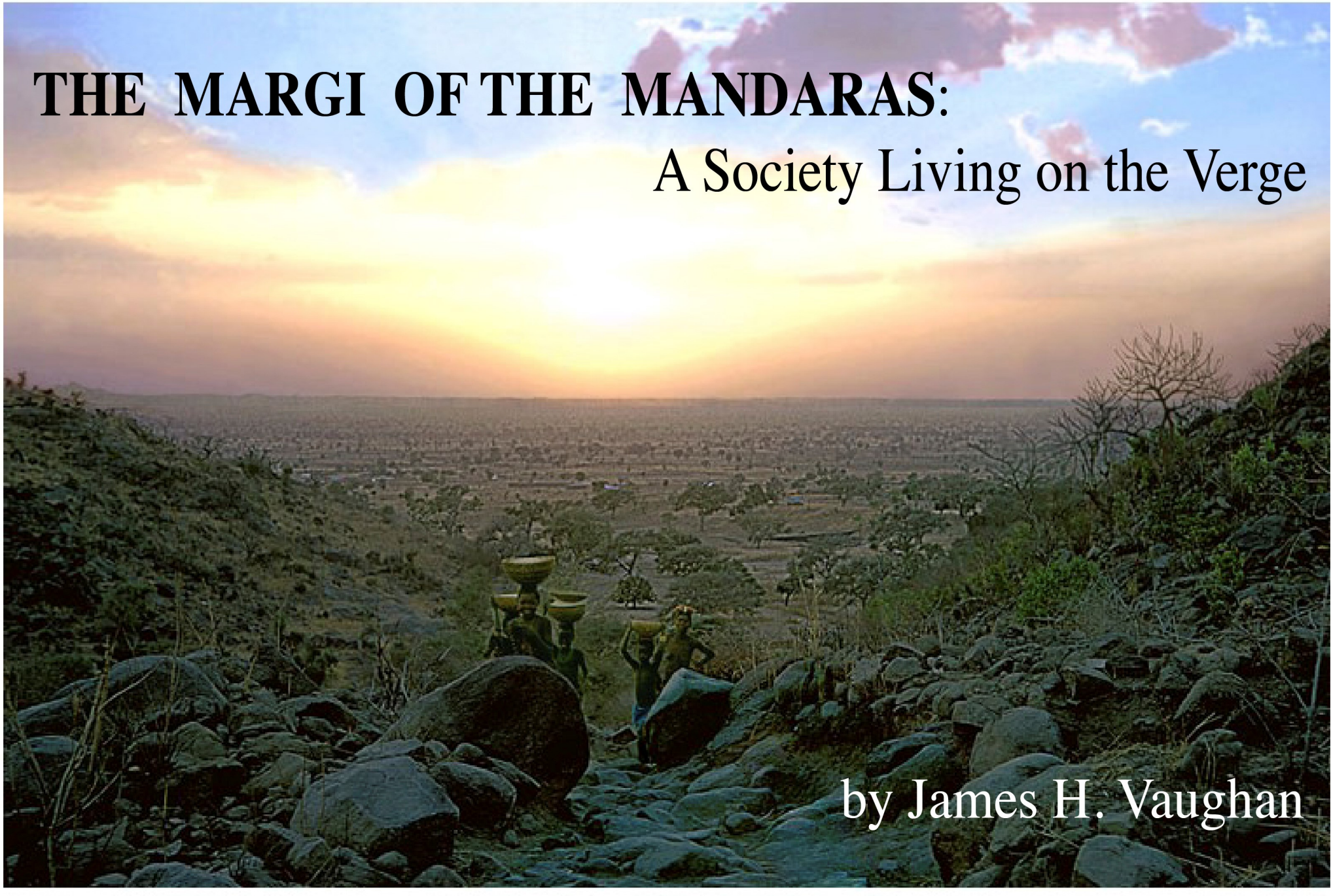
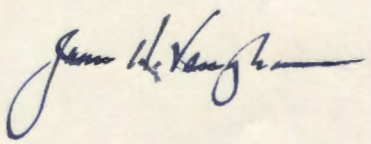


THE MARGI OF THE MANDARAS:

A Society Living on the Verge

by James H. Vaughan

THE MARGI OF THE MANDARAS:
A SOCIETY ON THE VERGE



verge (OF, f. L virga twig, rod, magic wand)
— A rod or staff carried as a symbol of authority.... Within the verge, within an area subject to the jurisdiction of the lord steward, defined as extending to a distance of twelve miles of the King's court.
— The extreme edge of a cliff or abrupt descent.
— The brink or border of something towards which there is progress or tendency.

Editor's Note

James H. Vaughan wrote *The Margi of the Mandaras* during the 1970s and early 1980s. It was accepted for publication by the Indiana University Press in 1982, but for unknown reasons Vaughan decided not to publish it. He continued to tinker with it through the 1990s and even into early 2000, before setting it aside entirely. He spent the next five years working on his Margi photographs, ultimately displaying them at a show at the Mathers Museum of World Cultures at Indiana University in 2005, and then created a corresponding website (http://www.indiana.edu/~margi/).

In addition to this copy, four other versions of the manuscript exist. The other four survive only in paper, printed at unknown times and then placed in storage. The fifth version, the one published here, was produced from Vaughan's computer files. These files were last updated between January 1998 and July 2000. This version was selected for publication because it is believed to be the last version updated. The Table of Contents of each version is basically the same, but close examination of the chapters reveal there are small differences in the text. Those who wish to see the other versions should consult the papers of James Vaughan at Indiana University, or contact the editor.

A few notes regarding this particular manuscript:

- SPACING: The chapter/files were converted multiple times between several software packages and computers. As a result, spacing issues and page breaks existed at the time of editing. The editor corrected these when seen.

- SPELLING/GRAMMAR/PUNCTUATION: No corrections were made to English words, however the file conversions often placed numbers or symbols in Margi words. The editor attempted to correct these, but because the insertions were inconsistent and only appeared in Margi words, it is likely that some were missed. No changes were made to the original grammar or punctuation.

- ORTHOGRAPY: In the paper versions of the manuscript, custom characters were used so the proper Margi spelling could be achieved. In particular the ə symbol and the ŋ symbol were used. The computerized version of the manuscript did not use these characters. Consult the paper manuscripts to see the proper use of the characters.

- APPENDIX A & B: An appendix was found in one of the paper versions of the manuscript. It has been included here. It was scanned and the above Margi characters are visible. It is not obvious where Appendix B begins, but the editor believe it is on the middle of the 10th page.

- MAPS/DIAGRAMS/TABLES: The computerized version of the manuscript did not included any maps or diagrams, and only a few tables. It did however, include headings for each. The editor scanned the corresponding Map/Diagram/Table from one of the printed versions and inserted them into this version.

- PHOTOGRAPHS: The two photographs in Chapter 10 (Plate 10-1 and 10-2) were not included in any manuscripts. The pictures appear on Vaughan's website and the editor believes he intended to use them in the manuscript. Likewise, the "cover" and back picture were selected from the website.

- PARENTHETIC PAGE NOTES: Occasionally, Vaughan indicates the reader should consult other pages in the manuscript. For instance "(pp. 315-318)". In these cases, the page numbers have been updated to correspond to the version of the document that is published here.

- PARENTHETIC WORDS: Likewise, this manuscript occasionally had a word in parentheses followed by question marks "(Exterior???)" The editor interpreted these as optional words Vaughan considered using instead of the word he did use. The editor selected the one word he felt was best and eliminated the optional word and parentheses.

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The Margi of the Mandaras: A Society on the Verge

Table of Contents

To view photographs taken over a 30 years period while working with the Margi, please consult the website: http://www.indiana.edu/~margi/

Preface

A study spanning twenty-odd years obviously is indebted to very any people. I have received funds from the Ford Foundation and Indiana University's Office of Research and Graduate Development, the African Studies Program, and the Sabbatical Leaves Committee. But it is the people I have encountered during the long course of this work to whom I am most indebted. Without the full and generous cooperation of thousands of Margi, some of whom will receive more specific mention below, none of this would have been possible. Other Africans and Euroamericans in Nigeria were also very helpful either with material resources, advice, or hospitality. In particular I wish to mention the Department of Sociology at Ahmadu Bello University, which provided both institutional and personal support, and the Church of the Brethren, which very generously assisted with logistics. In retrospect, I am impressed and awed by the helpfulness of all the people whom I have encountered in the course of this research. They are literally too many to name, though some were so important that they must be acknowledged below.

I first arrived among the Margi in October 1959 and was soon joined by my wife and our two children ages two and five. I visited several hamlets in different Margi areas, looking for a suitable residence from which I could conduct my research. I seriously considered Dille among the Margi Babal and Womdi in the Margi Titum area, but I settled upon a hamlet in the center of the Margi Dzirngu, an area called Gulak after its administrative headquarters and a name which is a corruption of Gulagu, the name of a traditional Margi kingdom.

I had, in fact, been strongly urged to study these Margi by the late H. Stover Kulp, a missionary who began his work among the Margi in 1927 (M. A. Kulp 1968). The District

Officer Frank Widdas also suggested that I settle in Gulak, and I had an excellent contact there through Anthony H. M. Kirk-Greene who first suggested that I might study the Margi. However, I obstinately resisted locating there if only to demonstrated my independence of both missionary and government administrator.

Eventually, the suitability and the beauty of the area convinced me, and I had a compound constructed in Kirngu, a hamlet of 336 people. At first, we were greeted with reserve and curiosity. The Margi Dzirngu had known few Europeans, and none had ever lived among them in the manner which we proposed. Our integration was inhibited by our cultural differences and our inexpert mastery of the local language, but in time, thanks in no small part to our children, we were a relatively normal part of the community. We lived there until November 1960 when the fieldwork was concluded.

During that first residence, I spent the greatest part of my time doing a general study of Margi Dzirngu society, focusing upon its political system. Kirngu was the royal hamlet and I enjoyed a close relationship with Yarkur, the Ptil (King) of Gulagu. I was favored by a number of intelligent research assistants whose names I mention in the order in which I met them: Ojo Shuwa (later Muhammadu Sanusi Shuwa), Bulama W. Birdling, and Muhammadu Sikamu Simnda. A number of others did outstanding work in briefer periods: Bitrus Kajal, Mdumari Ndijida, and Margima Gadzama. Finally, in 1962 Nggida Gadzama, a student at McPherson College in Kansas, visited me in Cincinnati and assisted me as I reviewed my materials.

The days in the field were diverse; some were occupied pursuing specific topics, others in following unfolding events, and all included household and family responsibilities. Perhaps something of the flavor may be sensed from a sample of entries from the daily diary I kept (as distinct from field notes).

May 16: Spent the morning in [our] village. Saw most spirited games yet. Returned to write. Rain in early afternoon. [Our] Children [who were caught in the rain] told of staying with men drinking beer and drumming. Went to Ghumbili [a nearby mountain community] for fulbili [ceremony celebrating the birth of twins]. Small crowd but got excellent view. Only one twin survived. Susan [our daughter] walked both ways; becoming a regular mountain goat.

August 8: Talked to U. about court procedures in pre-modern times. In p.m. watched Ptil judge [an informal and probably illegal court session]. Saw B. bring in a thief. Got recipe for beer from M. and used G. [her husband] for some incidental details.

And then there were days like this:

October 5: After a little work in village, drove to within about a mile of River and met Dr. Hamer [who had agreed to come from Lassa on the other side of the river] who diagnosed our various ills. Susan now taking penicillin for swollen glands, Dickie [our son] taking terramycin for badly inflamed tonsils, Ann [my wife] has a staphylococcus infection in leg, and she and I both have swollen glands under our arms [which proved to be boils].

Dennis Harrison [Agricultural officer from Mubi] and Malcolm Cooper [UN observer for forth coming plebiscite] showed up for supper this evening. All the activity kept me from getting to the funeral which I needed to see. Damn!

In November of 1973, my wife, son, and I returned to Gulak, and were joined by our daughter the following January. On this occasion we were able to rent a vacant compound

which proved highly satisfactory. Perhaps because the "children" were then adults, I found that during this residence we were able to live much more simply than we had thirteen years earlier. I concentrated primarily upon demographic changes and my wife, an attorney, investigated the local courts. My principal assistant during this second field trip was Wampana Ibrahim (see Chapter 10), ably assisted by two young men, Usman Ibrahim and Daihiru Damburam. Isa Yampaya, adviser to the court, and Cecilia Gadzama, a remarkable young school teacher and the first of her sex in the area, worked with my wife. We left Gulak in April of 1974.

My wife and I returned to Gulak for two months in 1981 primarily to investigate aging but also to learn of the most recent changes. Ali Damburam, a medical student at the University of Maiduguri, was especially interested in our work on aging, and Suni Lagu, a student at Ahmadu Bello University, as well as several of our former assistants helped us.

Many of our former research assistants had achieved positions of importance. Muhammadu Sanusi was the District Head, Bulama Birdling had been chief administrative officer of the hospital at Lassa but more recently had been elected to the Gongola State Assembly, Muhammadu Sikamu was Agricultural Officer of Madagali District, Bitrus Kajal had been elected to the Federal Senate, Nggida Gadzama had earned his Ph.D. and was a professor at the University of Maiduguri, and Usman Ibrahim was a school teacher in a local school.

I have already mentioned the help and advice of Anthony H. M. Kirk-Greene; my indebtedness to him cannot be overstated. Other former British administrators, notably Desmond F. H. MacBride and Derek Mountain were also of great assistance. We were also assisted by many of the missionaries in the area. Those with whom we had the closest contact included Stover Kulp, Pattie and Irven Stern, Robert and Beatrice Bishof, John and Mildred

Grimley, all from the Church of the Brethren, and from the Basel Mission, Jurgen and Judith Quack.

My intellectual orientation is a meld of influences from teachers, colleagues, and students beyond my capacity to sort out, but there is one person I feel compelled to name. During my first permanent academic appointment I was exposed to the importance and uses of population and demography by Arthur Hinman, my colleague at the University of Cincinnati. I argued long with him and he will be surprised to find his name here, but the force of his arguments were not lost on me, as I hope this study will reveal. I only regret that I had not had his influence when I first went to the field.

My friend and former colleague, Beth Divina, read the manuscript and offered editorial suggestions. Her intelligent layman's perspective has, I believe, improved its readability. Rita Harper has typed the many drafts with Jobian patience.

The help provided by my wife and children has been of two sorts. Each has interviewed his or her peers and done yeoman service in our daily life in the field. But of equal importance, their simple presence established me as a normal and multidimensional person which immeasurably helped me relate to my neighbors and they to me. There is no field technique which establishes rapport better or more honestly than shared domestic concerns. When my wife and I returned in 1981 it seemed that every conversation began with a recounting of what had become of our children.

Finally, I must add a note regarding orthography and a statement concerning monetary equivalencies. A full discussion of the Margi language is found in Hoffmann (1963); the words contained herein use a modified orthography. Tonal diacritics are omitted and only the following symbols have special meaning:

ə is a central or "mid-mixed" vowel

ŋ is a voiced velar nasal

dl is a voiced alveolar lateral

thl (tl in Hoffmann) is a voiceless alveolar lateral

gh is a voiced velar fricative.

In 1959-60, currency was the Nigerian Pound and £I (Nigerian) equaled £1 (British) and $2.80 (US); in 1973-74 and subsequently, the Nigerian Naira was the standard such that ₦ 1 equaled 50p (British) and $1.54 (US).

Chapter 1

Introduction: Neofunctionalist Ethnography

In 1959, I came to Margiland seeking an unacculturated society into which a significant innovation had been suddenly and recently introduced. It had been suggested to me by Anthony H. M. Kirk-Greene, who had served as a District Officer in the area and knew that the Church of the Brethren (US) had in 1951 built a sixty-one bed hospital at Lassa in Nigeria virtually on the border of then-Northern British Cameroons[1].

I soon discovered that although the consequences of the hospital were fully as radical as I anticipated in its immediate area, its effects--particularly its social consequences--soon diminished as one moved into the surrounding area. My problem became one not of explaining change but stability. Clearly, I had failed to anticipate just how unacculturated, how culturally and socially autonomous were the remoter Margi, and how capable they were, in the security of their culture, to assimilate innovations with little alteration to their basic patterns. Nowhere was this more apparent than among the easternmost Margi, who resided across the river from Lassa in British Cameroons.

The Margi Dzru as I first encountered them were a very unacculturated population. The territory had been "open" for only ten years. Higher governmental authority had suppressed warfare, regulated taxes, and standardized judicial proceedings and punishments, but none of these represented a serious intrusion into daily life of any but a few. For all practical purposes the traditional political system flourished. The economy was almost entirely based upon subsistence production. The impact of a newly completed all-season road was not yet significant, though new manufactured goods were appearing in the local market.

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[1] This word has been spelled Kamerun, Cameroons, Cameroun, and Cameroon according to whether it was under German, British, French, or independent rule. In the following pages I have used the spelling appropriate to the time being discussed.

Although future changes could be anticipated, the adaptive capacity of the society was impressive. I decided to write an ethnography of the Margi which would attempt to capture their stable yet dynamic society, one which seemed to meet the intruding world on their terms. I completed such a manuscript, but events in 1964 which were reported to me and observations made during a brief visit in 1971 revealed that there were forces of change much greater than I had understood. Not only had historical events overtaken the Margi, but their reactions to this change and, more importantly, the consequences of population growth made my depiction of a stable society no longer appropriate. Radical change was in the offing.

From a fairly conventional synchronic interpretation of a self-sufficient, relatively autonomous society, I found myself struggling with the topic of change. I saw these events as something more than accident, for the more I looked the more I saw pattern in the change, particularly in the context of the population change which I first noted in 1971.

The result is an intensive view of a single society and largely of one political unit within that society. I have not attempted to write an ethnographic survey of the area (Cf. Lembzat 1961) or a broader regional or national interpretation (Cf. Abubaker 1977; Kirk-Greene 1958; Kano 1979). These are valid and very likely more objective views, each having a broader perspective than I have sought. But they miss precisely what I feel is the essence of anthropological field work; the view of a people in one corner of the scene. They are not passive dependent variables; they are participants who have not been overwhelmed by developments and who have largely been in control of their destinies. Yet, their horizons are broadening, their old ways are proving inadequate, and suddenly they find themselves making choices and decisions never dreamed of by their ancestors. That they are but a part of a larger picture misses the point; to them, they are the

picture.

This ethnography portrays Margi society at a particularly crucial period in its history. The years between 1959 and 1981 saw the most radical changes since the adoption of the dynastic principle some 500 years ago, including the dissolution of that principle.

The greater portion of the work necessarily concerns the earlier part of the period, not because that more stable time is more worthy or interesting, but because changes are understandable only in the context of antecedent social conditions. In the description which appear in the following chapters we seem often brought to the verge of collapse or revolution, as Margi society evolves from a self-sufficient, socially autonomous society to ... something else. A something else which is not clear, for although we see in the last chapter that the revolution has begun, the time span is not sufficient for adaptation to new circumstances to be yet manifest in consensual social patterns.

Although the characteristics of Margi society are not used in this presentation to test particular hypotheses, I do not wish to suggest that there is no theoretical perspective or that no problem is investigated. Briefly put, the perspective is neofunctionalist and the central problem concerns the change and survival of societies like the Margi in an ever-demanding and ever-intrusive world.

In order to explicate the theoretical perspective, it will be necessary to delay further discussion of the Margi for a few pages and make a brief journey into the theory and history of anthropology.

Social and cultural anthropology have two objectives: description and analysis of specific societies and social events, commonly called ethnography, and the construction of abstract

principles of social and cultural behavior based upon comparative analysis of several societies, often called ethnology in the United States. It is inaccurate to say that the former is descriptive while the latter is theoretical; however, there is sometimes little conscious use of theory in ethnography, due in part to the persistence of an older notion that description is non-theoretical. Today, it is recognized that every ethnographer collects, presents, perhaps even sees events in terms of a conception of society and social process, whether this perspective be objectified or no. Yet, if ethnography is not less theoretical than ethnology, it is probable that it will be less abstract; for its focus is upon an existential reality and it must stand reality testing in a way inappropriate to ethnology. Ethnography must remain relatively specific, for the ethnographer cannot ignore the perceptions of his informants nor the realities of their surroundings. Thus, the first task of the ethnographer is to capture on paper, film, and tape as accurate and faithful a reproduction of events as possible within his objectives.

But this is not his sole task, for having made this dichotomy between ethnography and ethnology, let me immediately note that the distinction is largely analytic. In practice, the ethnographer is also an ethnologist; he is knowledgeable about classifications used by others and he anticipates general formulations of his own data. The ultimate scientific value of an ethnography will rest upon its ability to provide analytic insights into social and cultural behavior, and this may be anticipated in the ethnography.

In the following presentation, my first goal is to describe Margi society and the changes since 1960 in a manner faithful to Margi perceptions, but I have also classified and analyzed those descriptions in a theoretical perspective in the hope that this will not only enhance our understanding of Margi society but of other similar societies.

An ethnography should contain a statement of the ethnographer's conception of society, for that view will inevitably shape the presentation. I view society and its culture as networks of behavioral relationships and validating beliefs which represent a populations' responses to its social and natural environments. However, the responses of human populations are not narrowly determined by biology and situational challenge in a simple cause-and-effect model. Every population has recall to an inventory of responses in the customs of its ancestors in addition to its capacity for innovation. Custom, at most, provides a guide for behavior, a constraint upon but not a prohibition to innovation. Consequently, I view any specific society as a complex formulation which is the product of many variables--dependent, independent, and interdependent-- all in a temporal matrix.

The temporal dimension poses yet another problem for the ethnographer. As social behavior is the product of extant forces, later circumstances may evoke a different social response. Stated in this way, an ethnography may seem an exercise in obsolescence. There are, however, two important mitigating considerations. First, the sociological value of knowledge is independent of its historical value, and secondly, there is continuity in human society, a continuity which is found in the succession from one generation to another. Shakespeare's statement that past is prologue is not only an observation about the uses of history but of the continuity in life.

In addition to the continuity in social behavior through time, there is also a sequential quality in the activities of life. Individuals move through their lives with a flow that challenges assumptions that societies are divided into parts. Experience is integral, yet it is this experiential integrity which is so difficult for the ethnographer to capture. Description inevitably flays an event

and not only robs it of its vitality but of its wholeness.

The integration of society is one of the principal tenets of functionalism; yet that perspective is very often criticized for its inability to explain social change, an explicit goal of this ethnography. It is not my intention to offer a general exposition of functionalism, only to place the orientation of this ethnography in historical and theoretical perspective and to indicate where my usage is an extension of or a deviation from past practice. For the interested reader I suggest reviews of functionalism by Abrahamson (1978), Jarvie (1973), Levy and Cancian (1968), Smith (1973), and Turner and Maryanski (1979).

Ethnographic functionalism is inevitably associated with the name of Bronislaw Malinowski (1922; 1926; 1931; 1932; 1944; 1945). His extensive involvement with the Trobriand Islanders led him to reject the more mechanistic models of society used by previous anthropologists. As Max Gluckman, one of his severest critics (1947a; 1947b; 1960) has noted:

> Malinowski became aware of the complexity and intricacy of social life among his islanders. He saw the life of the individual not as just moving from a wedding to a funeral, but he studied men and women of all ages, living together in various stages of a marriage cycle. He saw boys and girls growing up to a culturally deter mined adulthood; and always he saw individuals living within culturally set customs and norms, trying to exploit these for their own ends, using and yet rebelling against their society, He showed that magic was not a set of ideas as in Frazer's treatment, but a real and vital part of love-making, agriculture, trading, politics – of living (1963;248; Cf. 1960:405).

As an approach to ethnographic description, functionalism has the advantage of acknowledging and attempting to portray society's seamless quality. The continuity of life, the importance of context, as well as the implication that the whole is, if not greater, then different from a catalog of its parts--all are subsumed within the functionalist approach. Institutions ceased to be parts of society and became the analyst's label for clusters of related activities. There are no finer

nor more durable ethnographies than those influenced by this view.

Despite Malinowski's acknowledged ethnographic skills, his ethnological formulation of functionalism, Jarvie argues (op. cit.:12f), was weak and gave way to the views of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown who disagreed with him in particulars but nonetheless is probably better known among anthropologists for the clearer formulation of the functionalist (which he called structuralist) position (1935; 1940; 1952:12; Srinivas 1958:39- 41).[2]

When attempts were made to extend functionalism to a form of ethnological analysis, conceptual problems emerged. Many writers have distinguished between functionalism as methodology and functionalism as theory (Abrahamson op. cit.:53, Homans 1964:810-811, Gellner 1958:184, Jarvie op. cit.:35, Turner and Maryanski op. cit.:132). However, I feel that this use of the word theory is misleading for reasons indicated above, and I prefer to have the distinction phrased as between ethnographic and ethnological functionalism. Most agree that ethnographic functionalism, portraying societies as integrated wholes, is uncontroversial. However, at least one variable considered in this ethnography, population growth, has broader implications for ethnological functionalism which shall be noted below.

Criticisms of functionalism are included in each of the reviews recommended above, perhaps most systematically in Turner and Maryanski (op. cit.:108-27), who note two logical criticisms, illegitimate teleology and tautology, and three substantive problems, lack of concern with history, conservatism ("support of the status quo in a system"), and inability to account for social change.

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[2] For an interesting and provocative contrast to this view of Malinowski, see Turner and Maryanski (op. cit.:44-57).

These criticisms, which are unquestionably valid for the work of most classical functionalists, are closely related in that the first four are each consequences of the last which in turn is the most often proffered criticism. The "static bias" as Smith terms it (op. cit.:2-4), was perhaps best caught in Radcliffe-Brown's characterization of comparative sociology as synchronic in contrast with the diachronic investigations which characterized history (1952b:4). Without a conception of society in which events are sequentially ordered over time, discussions of causality either become moot or easily degenerate into tautology or teleology; further, history is irrelevant, and society is a closed system which, to the extent that it is viable, is in equilibrium. Three of the criticisms are relevant to topics in this ethnography and deserve further discussion; these are causality, equilibrium, and change.

Without question some anthropologists have either implied or specifically stated that the function served by a custom was its cause, although such an inference was not based upon data but upon an assumption about the nature of functional relation ships. This tendency is not only a consequence of an indifference to causality, but it is an unfortunate consequence of popular English language usage. The word function is a synonym for purpose or intention; The Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary of Synonyms states, "Function . . . implies a definite end or purpose that the thing in question serves or is intended to perform." The step from this implication to causality is but a short one. Hence, one may easily move from a statement of functional relationship to a surmise of causality.

In fact, historical origins of customs are often unknowable for anthropologists, and the most usually to be said justifiable is that a function may be complementary with the suggested origins of a given custom. A narrower use of the word function, one without the teleological

implication, can be found in mathematics wherein function is a statement about covariation and interdependence of variables. This usage is consistent with most statements about the integration and interdependence of behavior which gave rise to ethnographic functionalism. It is in this sense that I use the term, I wish to be explicit: Where I indicate, for example, a functional relationship between the castes of Margi society, I am not implying that the castes developed to satisfy those functions. In truth, I have no convincing information about the origins or causes of the caste system among the Margi. I can only comment about how it operates during the recent past and the present.

The assumption that a social system is a balanced integration of parts not only implied to those classic functionalists a static equilibrium but also carried the connotation that social integration and harmony were the natural state of affairs. It led to descriptions of societies which can only be called eufunctional, the most benign consequence of which has been a tendency to view traditional societies romantically. Far too many ethnographies present idyllic descriptions devoid of the turmoil, unhappiness, and countless other unharmonious conditions found in all societies.

It must be conceded that some anthropologists recognized that Malinowski's formulation unrealistically avoid conflict as an inherent attribute of social organization (Gluckman 1947b: 109). In fact recognition and analysis of conflict became characteristic of Gluckman's so-called Manchester School of anthropology. But this approached owed more to Simel than Marx and tended to emphasize the integrative consequences of conflict or, in Simel's words, that "it is a way of achieving some kind of unity . . ."(1953:13). In this fashion, the conflicts between rivals for the office of ptil in the kingdoms of the Margi Dzru can be viewed as resolving deeper

antagonisms and ultimately establishing social unity, but one should never ignore the terrible carnage that sometimes occurred nor under estimate the revolutionary potential inherent in such actions.

Nor should the human misery in many societies be minimized or ignored just because it appears to be normal, that is, typical. Admittedly, when conditions become endemic they may be accepted and may be made meaningful through custom. But deeper investigation will, in my experience, reveal that beyond the acquiescence and resignation, there is sorrow, anger, and desire for relief, though perhaps not normally articulated. I have in mind the Margi customs which seem to minimize and make bearable the high infant mortality rates. One might well conclude from them that the rates have been integrated into their society and culture. But one should not conclude that the death of an infant is unimportant or that it is quickly forgotten. Although custom may inhibit the display of emotion or mute the admission of loss, other observations will indicate that few losses are more painful nor are any innovations so successful as those which diminish infant mortality. The evidence of history demonstrates the falseness of the eufunctionalist assumption; no society has failed to recognize and struggle against commonplace adversity.

The misguided tendency to view social integration as a positive condition has led to a further difficulty, for it conversely implies that anything which upsets integration is bad for societies. This observation has led such functionalists to have very conservative views concerning the modernization of non-western societies. The notion of societies, happy in their customary lifestyles, is, as noted above, romantic fantasy, but when this belief is offered as the basis for opposition to change, it becomes an ally of colonialism and imperialism or, at best, an excuse for indifference. Whether functionalists should be judged culpable is an historic ques tion beyond my

purposes[3], but whatever difficulty its practitioners have had in coming to accept change in the colonial world, the fact remains that functionalists have had difficulty incorporating change into their theoretical framework.

In a world filled with change, an ethnographer should not, in my opinion, portray a society as though it were frozen in time or as though it is solely affected by exogenous forces of change. Further, this is a point which must not divide ethno graphic from ethnnological uses of functionalism. It would be futile to describe change in ethnography as if it were historic accident, in order to leave it out of ethnological analysis. If functionalism does not offer a theory of society which can account for change, it is of little use in the world in which we live. Others have noted this problem and offered their own solutions; Smith converts functionalism into "neo-evolutionism" (op. cit.:passim), a term with different connotations to American anthropologists, and Turner and Maryanski resolve the problem by rejecting the organic analogy (op. cit.:131), per haps functionalism's most consistent theme.

I offer two considerations--a fuller examination of the notion of equilibrium and the inclusion of population as a variable rather than a constant--which, when taken into account in functionalist analysis, will accord with a view of the world in which societies are dynamic and changing. It may be argued that such a transformation destroys the distinctiveness of functionalism, though I feel it not so radical as to require more than the term "neofunctionalism."

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[3] Malinowski's "true" feelings toward his informants is the topic of an interesting exchange between Francis Hsu (1979, 1980) and Edmond Leach (1980a,1980b), and an historians view of Max Gluckman's attempts to be researcher and Marxist reveal something of the difficulties and dilemmas faced by an anthropologist bent on changing conditions for Africans in the 1940's (Brown 1979).

The concept equilibrium is borrowed from physics and mathematics, and an examination of its meaning is instructive for our metaphoric uses. When all forces acting upon a body are balanced in magnitude and direction, the condition is one of equilibrium, literally equal balance. It is, however, important to stress that the forces continue to be exerted although the body is at rest; if any force is changed in either magnitude or direction or another force added, the balance will be upset and the body will be set in motion. The study of bodies in motion is called dynamics.

When this more literal view is translated into social theory, the potentiality for change in every social situation may be seen. The term dynamic equilibrium, despite its paradoxical nature, can be aptly used to characterize this state. This is not only redresses the naive assumptions of both early functionalists and their critics, but it conforms with reality as ethnographers have long seen it. Every social situation is the resultant of contending forces, perhaps momentarily balanced but always with the potential for change; for variables exist in time and are subject to the differential effects of time. During the period of this study both environment and population changed which produced readjustments throughout the society.

In 1959-60 the various social groups--clans, hamlets, and kingdom--at Gulagu were integrated into a stable social unit, each with certain demands upon the loyalties and resources of individuals. However, the potential for change was just below the surface. Uncertainties of political succession, an increasing inability of clans to control land--exacerbated in later years by drought and the emergence of youths whose views were less provincial than their parents'--each was to alter the situation in such a way that Margi society changed significantly in the years ahead. Although one might not be able to predict the exact configuration and time of change, a thorough functional analysis should recognize the inevitability and the probable conformation of change.

The potential for change within the stability of the moment--dynamic equilibrium--can account for the random variation we may see in a society from one year to the next; but the questions remains, is that all there is to change--the random ness associated with the vagaries of history? If the facile explanations of nineteenth century cultural evolutionists were inadequate, were their observations of trends in the change of human society false? We return to the assumption that no variable within the functionalist model could generate change; with no autogenetic capability, the early model relied primarily upon extra-societal forces such as culture contact for the impetus for change. (Lucy Mair states that "when Malinowski wrote of social change he was always thinking of the changes that have been created by the external pressure of colonial rule"[1965:234].) There is, however, one element of all social models, population, which has an autogenetic potential though it has been largely ignored in anthropology[4].

Virtually all discussions of functionalism acknowledge its emphasis and dependence upon individuals as living elements of the social equation. It is, however, my criticism that the proclivity of individuals to reproduce and the consequences thereof has rarely been recognized by anthropologists as the impelling force which history reveals it to have been.

There are two aspects of human reproduction which insure change in society. The first is

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[4] It would be inaccurate to suggest that all social and cultural anthropologists have ignored population in their studies. Two notable exceptions are Howell's recent study of the Dobe !Kung 1979 and the historical study of English parishes by Macfarlane et al. (1977), and there are edited collections by Polgar (1971 and 1975) and Nag(1975). However, the lack of regard which the profession holds for population as a significant variable in social analysis can be concluded form a survey I made of the twelve textbooks which I received from publishers with copyrights in the period 1980 to 1982. None had a thorough discussion of population; none had a chapter or even a section which treated the general topic (some briefly discussed population growth and size with respect to warfare, development of the state, or as a consequence and problem associated with colonialism or industrialization). In only two books did the word demography appear in the indexes which undoubtedly accounts for the failure of all to discuss anything beyond size or growth.

implied above in the mention of succession, for no individual ever socially reproduces itself. The dependence of the human animal upon learning, in contrast to instincts, and the impossibility of reproducing any parent's learning situation will result in social variation from generation to generation. This factor, however, is more related to the discussion of variation than to directional change.

It is a second characteristic of human population which gives society an autogenetic quality such that change becomes normal and predictable. I refer to the tendency for populations to increase in size. Although the size of societies may fluctuate, particularly when scientific medical care is lacking, over long periods of time population has grown at very consistent rates. This gradually necessitated social adjustments. Although specific reactions varied with local circumstances, all had a similarity in that they were responses to a common impetus, population change. Societies increased in complexity as they developed institutional means of coping with larger numbers of individuals living in closer proximity; this was the "evolution" noted by nineteenth century armchair anthropologists.

Population growth in the pre-industrial period was quite slow--only about .001 per annum for Africa at the end of the nineteenth century--and given the inevitable occurrence of short-term population fluctuation, it is not surprising that population growth was not recognized as a force for change. Consequently, early evolutionists lacked an appreciation for population as the dynamic force students of industrial societies now know it to be, and their model seemed to rely upon a mysterious propensity for "growth" which early field workers could not find. Hence, much of the early debate on evolutionism.

Since the societies which anthropologists most frequently studied have been non-industrial,

it has been often assumed that they shared many characteristics with pre-industrial societies; the notion of "primitive contemporaries" was essential to evolutionists' thinking. However, regardless of other similarities, in the twentieth century the populations of non-industrial societies have not behaved like those of pre-industrial societies; they have grown much more rapidly. To some extent this resulted from improved food production which came from contact with industrial societies, but to a far greater extent it is a result of dramatic worldwide effects of modern scientific medicine. Thus, we find a convergence of genetic forces, characteristic population growth accelerated by extern al innovations which influence fertility and mortality.

The benefits of medical technology have been accepted throughout the world with a readiness that rivals almost any other cultural transmission. Furthermore, these benefits have been, in many cases, instituted without apparent disruption or in some cases without the knowledge of the affected societies. Consequently, during the past approximately one hundred years not only have population characteristics of industrial societies changed rapidly, but so have those of non-industrial societies. Admittedly, there has been something of a lag between the two, but the relationship is unmistakable. Indus trial societies have come to recognize the problems of continuously expanding populations and have significantly controlled fertility. This perception has not been generally recognized in the less developed societies, and they have largely rejected the new fertility technology, although it seems inevitable that in time they, too, must attempt to limit population growth.

The growth of population in the past century has been even more precipitous in less developed societies than in industrial ones, because in the latter the improvement of medical technology was relatively slow and complementary values developed concomitantly. Thus, as

infant mortality was being controlled, parents assimilated the consequences and adjusted their expectations. In non-industrial societies the technology has been sudden and little attempt has been made to explain its consequences to individuals. The result is that parents still assume that maximum fertility is necessary and desirable for the perpetuation of society, and populations grows 25 to 30 times its former rate. Consequently, much greater demands are being placed on resources than anything ever observed in the pre-industrial period. Nor can we ignore the fact that the changes are much more than mere consequences of increasing size; for example, the distribution of the ages changes also. Not only will the aged increase in absolute numbers, eventually they will increase in proportion. Among the Margi a decreasing respect for the opinions of the aged is not only related to the introduction of schooling but is correlated with the increasing number of aged persons who continue to control land and other resources to the exclusion of the young.

The relationship between population characteristics and society is a complex one, and I do not intend to suggest that population is totally an independent variable. But the consistent growth of population throughout history and its precipitous growth in the twentieth century has been too long neglected by anthropologists. One must doubt the accuracy of a social analysis done in the 1940's, for example, which ignored the fact that population was increasing by twenty percent in that decade or one done in the 1970's when the increase in the decade was thirty percent. An ethnography which ignores the consequences of such rapid growth may seem to describe systems in equilibrium or a static society, but that abstraction is as misleading as if the ethnographer had chosen to ignore the relationships of the society to its environment or to its history.

In defense of anthropologists, it must be acknowledged that population data for many societies were and, in some instances, still are non-existent, incomplete, or unreliable. It must also

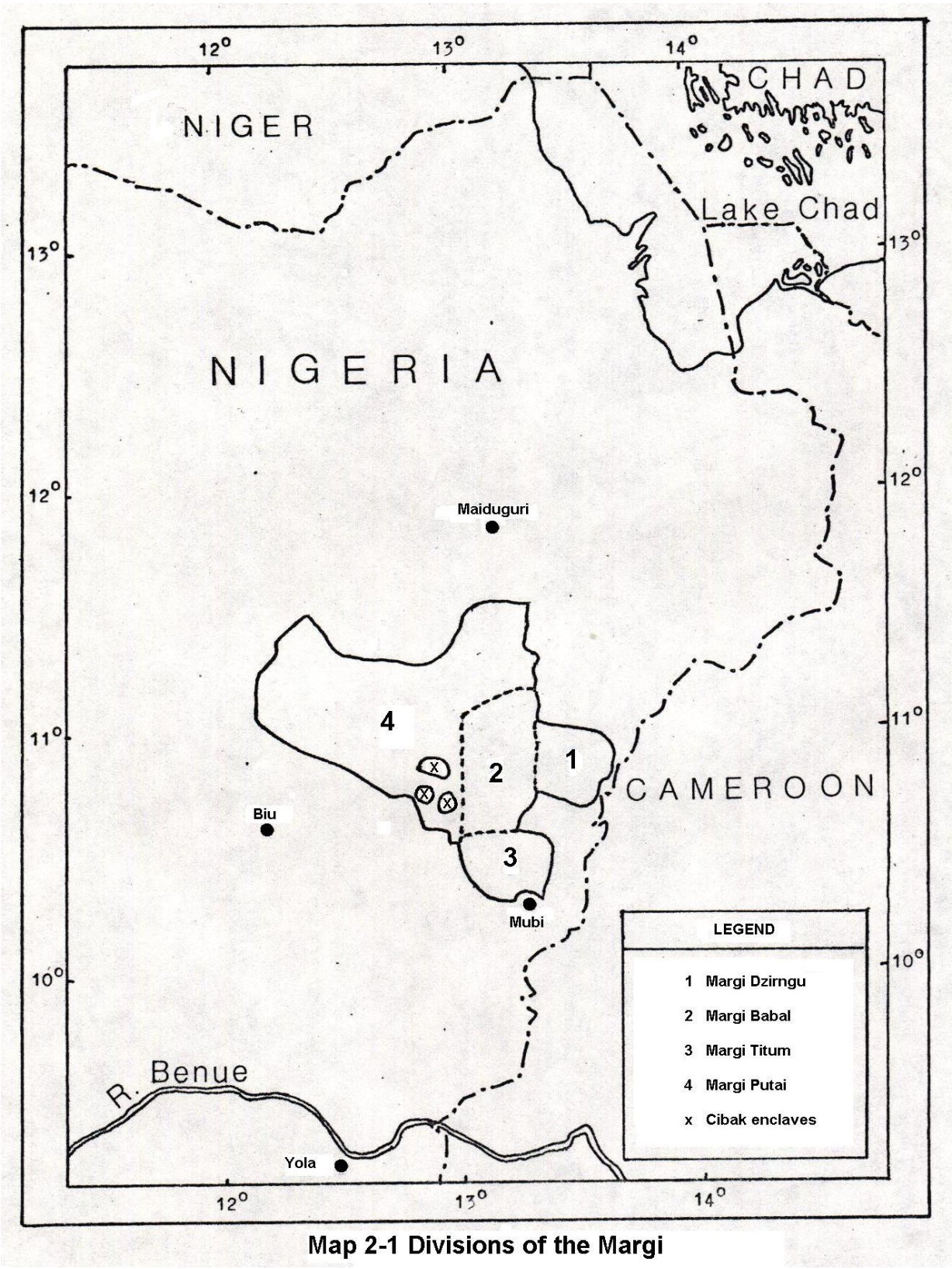
be conceded that although population is now in creasing rapidly, the relatively short periods spent in the field make it difficult to perceive the change. Finally, short-term fluctuation and migratory displacement may disguise real growth. In 1959-60 period, I found very little which gave me any sense of the growth of Margi population (nor had my training suggested that this was an important issue). No censuses had been taken except as an adjunct of tax collection and these varied with the intensity of tax collection policy. (In fact, the 1960 tax census showed a recognizably false decrease of nineteen percent from the preceding year!) However, when we returned in 1973 there was such obvious evidence of population growth that I could no longer avoid recognizing it as the significant and inevitable harbinger of change that my reading of the sociological literature had led me to anticipate.

In summary, this ethnography attempts to reveal the inter relationships of Margi behavior and to place that behavior in the context of its natural, historical, and social milieu. There is little discussion and no presumption of the origins or ultimate causes of their behavior. Nor is there an assumption that the greater social and cultural stability apparent during our earlier residence is more desirable than the in choate situation which prevailed during our last visit. Finally, I view the changes which are taking place to be consequences of forces both endemic and external to Margi society. Their population growth has so severely strained their older institutions of social control and resource allocation that alternatives are being sought; while from without their society, schooling, medical technology, nationalist ideologies, and cosmopolitan religions have provided alternative patterns which seem to be becoming--with modifications-- parts of the new society.

Chapter 2

The Margi World

(Dunya)



Map 2-1 Divisions of the Margi

In portions of the southern Chad Basin and along the adjacent western slopes of the Mandara Mountains live approximately 250,000 people who call themselves Margi. Today the area lies entirely within Nigeria, but the portion east of the Yedseram River has been, successively, a part of German Kamerun (1899-1918), French Cameroun (1918-22), Northern British Cameroons (1922-60), and Northern Cameroons under United Nations Administration (1960-61). The Margi recognize four subdivisions, the Margi Dzirngu, the Margi Babal, the Margi Titum, and the Margi Putai (Map 2-1).

The easternmost group, divided from the rest by the Yedseram River, are the Margi Dzirngu (udzir = near; ngu = mountains), and as their name implies they live along the verge of the Mandara Mountains, though today a larger number have spread into the plain that lies between the mountains and the river. These were the last Margi to become acculturated, the area being designated "unsettled" territory until the late 1940's, although since about the mid-1960's they have been rapidly modernizing. It is with the Margi Dzirngu that this study is primarily concerned, and more particularly it is from the Kingdom (ptilkur) of Gulagu that much of the data come.

The central Margi, residing well out into the Chad Basin, are called the Margi Babal (babal = open place; plains). For the most part the inhabitants of this area were largely traditionalist as recently as 1960. However, there was and is marked Christian influence radiating from the town of Lassa in the southeastern portion of the area, and the northern portion has long been under Islamic influence as a consequence of contacts with the neighboring Kanuri. In fact it is difficult to ascribe a northern boundary due to the Kanurization of the population. The Margi Babal and the Margi Dzirngu show many similarities and may be regarded as the core Margi.

The Margi Titum (ti = mourn; ntum = pot: from a custom of using a pottery drum in their

funerary ceremonies) are located in the south and show many similarities with their neighbors, the Kilba. Margi Dzirngu who visited the town of Womdi could converse with the Titum only by using a lingua franca, and I found many of their customs more similar to the Kilba than to either Margi Dzirngu or Margi Babal. Meek arrived at a similar conclusion (1931, I:216), and Hoffman states that "their language in almost every respect shows a much closer relationship to Kilba than Margi" (1963:3). The Margi Putai (putai = west) are the most obscure of the four groups, and the extensive area shown on Map I is, in fact, misleading. Hansford et al. note that the "language [is] dying out" (1976a:12S) and "possibly the majority now speak Kanuri" (1976b:120). One western group with apparent Margi roots have differentiated themselves as the Cibak.

"The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached." This statement by Edward Sapir (1929:209) is interpreted as an assertion of linguistic determinism, yet it has a narrower applicability to which every ethnographer can attest. Each society selects, emphasizes, and reacts to its surroundings in unique ways not only because the environment may be different but because its response to it is different. The Margi conception of the world (dunya) includes their natural environment, peoples of other societies which interact with them, and the supernatural forces which also reside around them. The Margi perceive those to be relevant variables in the world in which they live; each has an impact upon them and to each they respond.

The Margi Dzirngu live very largely within the present administrative district of Madagali, which has its headquarters in the town of Gulak. The western boundary of the district is the Yedseram River and approximately three-fourths of its area is savanna river basin. However, it is the eastern mountainous one-fourth of the district which constitutes its most

dramatic topography as well as its former population center.

The Mandara Mountains are more than an eastern boundary of contemporary Margi, for it is from them that people have come in numerous migrations spread over a long period. Even as some Margi moved out into the plains, they tended to settle around inselbergs to which they could retreat when threatened by enemies.

As scenery, the mountains are magnificent. Henrich Barth, who visited the area in 1851, described his first view of the Mandaras as follows:

> We had scarcely emerged from the narrow lanes of the village, when I was gratified with the first sight of the mountainous region; it was Mount Deládebá or Danlántubá, which appeared towards the south, and the sight of which filled my heart with joyous anticipations not unlike those with which, on my first wandering in 1840, I enjoyed the distant view of the Tyrolean Alps . . . . (1857, II:369).

This description of the northernmost of the Mandaras was followed on June 8, 1851, when, from the outskirts of the northern Margi village of Isge, he viewed the lands of the Margi Dzirngu and wrote:

> At length the monotonous gloomy forests gave way to scattered clusters of large trees, such as generally indicate the neighbourhood of man's industry, and we soon after emerged upon beautiful green meadow-lands stretching out to the very foot of the Wándalá [Mandara] mountains, the whole range of which, in its entire length from north to south, lay open to view. It was a charming sight, thebeautiful green of the plain against the dark colour of the mountains, and the clear sunny sky . . .(1857, II:389).

These mountains are doubtlessly more impressive to the traveler from the Nigerian plain for the striking contrast which they create. They are not, in fact, very high, only occasionally exceeding 4,000 feet, but they rise so abruptly from the plains that the effect is fully as dramatic as Barth indicates. Additionally, the mountains are very rugged with rock outcroppings, boulders, and cliffs in profusion. Finally, and most dramatically, the spine of mountains which

today forms one portion of the border between Nigeria and Cameroon is constituted of the cores of extinct volcanoes like giant fingers pointed skyward.

This is the view from the Nigerian plains, a view which contrasts with the monotony of the plains, but in a sense it is also a view into the past--on the whole a past that was less generous than the present. The mountains are rugged and life there was and is hard. The view from the mountains-which is the traditional Margi view--while less aesthetically pleasing to Europeans is doubtlessly more pleasant for Margi. The "monotony" of the plains to them means spaciousness and abundance of farmland, for the mountains were heavily populated and farmland limited.

Although the terraced farm lands on the slopes of the mountains are nearly exhausted, the fields at the base of the mountains are very fertile. The fertility decreases as one moves farther into the plains, though there land is more plentiful. The mountainous terrain produces vegetation more lush than one normally expects in this part of the West Sudan. Rainfall measurements have been kept only irregularly in the area of the Dzirngu; they indicate an average of 37 inches per year with an average variation of 2.25 inches. During the summer months the springs in the mountains are full and streams rush across the basal plain to empty into the boiling Yedseram River which parallels the mountains and eventually empties into Lake Chad. With the rains comes greenness, but for the rest of the year the prevailing colors are the yellow and brown of dried grass, soil, and sand. Then the streams revert to sandy gullies, most of the mountain springs soon dry-up, and eventually even parts of the Yedseram disappears revealing a surprisingly shallow river bed in which children play and women dig for traces of water.

Margi divide the year according to a lunar calendar, beginning with the new moon around the vernal equinox-though Margi are unknowing of this solar event. The first two months (month = moon = hya) are good months; they constitute a period called jamar. The sky is clear, the sun

bright, temperatures during the day are high--over 100° F.--but in the 60°'s at night. The air is dry and comfortable. Towards the end of the first month clouds will appear in the sky and thunderheads appear on the horizon. Rain during these months is light and scattered--only 3.25" for the two months in 1960--and consequently no one begins planting, but clearly thoughts and activities anticipate the rainy season and it is a time to prepare the fields.

The rainy season, viya, lasts from the third through the seventh months. It is characterized by tropical thunderstorms, high humidity and moderate temperatures, though nights are warmer due to the greater amount of cloud cover. The rains diminish sharply in the seventh month, and finally end in the eighth. The season of fagu, the eighth through the tenth months, is--except for the last weeks--hot, dry, and clear. Some early harvesting of grains begins in the seventh month but mainly it is done in the eighth, ninth, and into the tenth months. The tenth month, the last of the numbered months, sees the arrival of the harmattan (purdu), the dust laden continental winds which blow off the Sahara. The haze of the harmattan is frequently so dense that the sun is obscured and the temperature may be cool by day (80°F) and quite cool by night (45°F). At most times the sky is hazy and the aridity is pronounced. In the eleventh month, the final season, hyapci, begins; it is marked by diminishing harmattan, bright sun and high temperatures—much like the first season--the cycle over.

A 12-month lunar calendar is, of course, slightly shorter than the solar year and must be supplemented from time to time with a thirteenth month in order that the seasons and months coincide correctly. The proper time to do this is recognized when the months do not coordinate with natural and celestial phenomenon. Some of these are universal occurrences such as the annual rains or the appearance of certain migratory birds, but others are local in nature such as the appearance of certain stars relative to a particular mountain. In general, however, Margi have

very little use for precise time measures; and as one moves from one part of the country to another, it is not uncommon to find the calendars to vary by a month simply because the thirteenth month is added by local decision and one area may add it before another.

This description of the topography and climate of the Margi may sound ideal; many travelers have found it delightful. But there is much that cannot be seen or immediately felt in the environment, for the area has the usual assortment of tropical diseases: malaria, shistosomiasis, hepatitis, and parasites of many varieties. There are occasional occurrences of smallpox (1959), leprosy, and cerebral meningitis, as well as the notorious Lassa Fever which takes its name from a Margi Babal village (Fuller 1974). Although there are minimal medical facilities located among the Margi--government and missionary dispensaries and a hospital run by the Church of the Brethren of the USA--mortality and morbidity rates are very high. The Mandara region is a remote part of Nigeria, and there have been no collection of vital statistics during the period of my studies of the Margi. but a view of Margi demography at the time my research began may be inferred from a French study of Northern Cameroun which also began in 1959 (Cameroun Service de la Statistic 1968[1]). One section of the Camerounian report is devoted to Mandara montagnards and is based upon surveys of six Mandara groups. The largest of these is the Matakam (Podlewski 1961), who abut and live interspersed with Margi, one hamlet being no more than 500 meters from the principal village in this report (Kirngu). The Matakam data (Table 2-1) do not differ significantly from the five other montagnard groups in the larger study of Northern Cameroun, nor for that matter, do they differ from the 1956 survey of Guinea, perhaps the earliest reliable

1 Although the title of this publication indicates that the materials cover 1962-1964, the information from the region north of the Benue was collected during the first six months of 1960, and at least some of Podlewski's Mandara data (1961) were collected in 1959.

Table 2-1 Camerounian Vital Statistics

	Cameroun	
	Matakam 1959	All Montagnards 1960
Percentage older than 49	10.8	11.3
Percentage younger than 15	44.8	41.0
Crude Birth Rate	68.2	57.0
Infant Mortality	167	190
Crude Death Rate	42.0	40.0
Life Expectancy from Birth	24	27

demographic study of a large African population. It is my contention that the demography of the Matakam in the 1959-60 period did not differ significantly from that of the Margi Dzirngu[2].

The figures in Table 2-1 reflect burgeoning birth rates and minimal control of health and life expectancy. Such characteristics have inescapable social and cultural consequences. The general role of women is circumscribed by the proportion of minors in the population, the extraordinarily high infant mortality rates helps explain Africans' perceptions of the need for more in the face of high birth rates, and the paucity of the aged relates to the awe and respect which accrues to them. The uncertainties of health, the pain and suffering from illness, and the uncertainty and mystery of death particularly influence religious thought and ritual behavior. In societies without scientific medicine or an understanding of the causes of disease, the concern with health and life crises become a major focus of rituals. Death and illness are omnipresent; funerals, burials, memorials, ancestral references, and offerings and sacrifices to alleviate illness are routine.

The Camerounian study not only revealed high mortality rates among the young, but at all ages. To an adult in his or her prime in such societies, the deaths of children, while lamentable, can be so frequent as to be unremarkable[3], and the deaths of the aged are understandably inevitable. But the deaths of those in their middle years is frightening and fundamentally personal. No funeral takes on the tragic intensity of one which honors a life significantly begun but unfulfilled. Among the montagnards more than 20% of all deaths occurred between the ages of 25 and 55, the years of greatest vigor and anticipation (Cameroun Service de la Statistic 1968:87).

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2 I would not assume today that the demography of the Margi, Matakam, and Camerounian montagnards is so similar. During the intervening years there have been very considerable changes among the Margi, as this paper demonstrates, but since I have not been in Cameroun since 1960, I am unable to speak of changes there.

3 If a Margi infant dies during the first week of its life, neither the birth nor the death is ever mentioned in public, and when counting number of children fathered, men sometimes do not recall these.

We may also gain a since of the vital statistics from data collected from two cohorts of post-menopausal women in 1959 and in 1973. The first—a group of 15 women—had given birth to 117 children of whom 65 (56%) were dead at the time the women were interviewed. The second cohort of 29 women had given birth to 224 children of whom 120 (54%) were dead (see Table 10-1). Of men 40 years of age and older, 85% had had at least one child die and the average was more than four.

As shocking as these figures may be to someone accustomed to the efficacy of Western medicine, they are not shocking to Margi, for high mortality rates have become a part of their expectations. In fact, we might say that they, like so many other societies, have come to grips with death; and if not victors, they do not feel like losers. Far more difficulty is experienced in adjusting to the continual, though unpredictable, instances of illness and disease which debilitate the population and sap its energy. The tragedy of malaria among these people is less the death it brings than the vitality of which it robs the population.

Societies adapt to the climatic conditions typical of their environmental settings, and it is tempting to regard a group's habitat as a constant in the social and cultural equation and even regard their adaptation as "normal." However, neither the student of society nor the resident in tropical savanna can afford to become complacent as the Sahalian drought (1967-75) so tragically demonstrated The Margi live on the southern fringe of the affected area and their rainfall was significantly below normal only in 1972 and 1973. In those two years rainfall was 26% and 43% below normal. To add to this problem, to the north the effects were more severe and protracted over a longer period of time, with the result that refugees, some with herds needing grazing lands, pushed into Margiland.

The social consequences of these developments will be discussed later, but at this point it

is important to emphasize that in addition to the uncertainties in the Margi habitat there is an uncertainty of the habitat which they must also meet and which influences their behavior.

In addition to the natural habitat there is a human environment composed of the societies surrounding the Margi. The population of Madagali District in 1981 was divided into nine culturally distinct groups totaling approximately 200,000 (Table 2-2).

Table 2-2[4]

Margi	96 000	48.00%
Fulani	28 500	14.25
Kapsiki	21 000	10.50
Sukur	14 000	7.00
Higi	11 500	5.75
Wagga	11 000	5.50
Tur	7 000	3.50
Vemgo	7 000	3.50
Matakam	2 000	1.00
Other[5]	2 000	1.00

It must be noted that government recognition of cultural distinctiveness does not always

4 These figures are based upon the 1981 tax census which one would expect to be less than the actual number, but the count is so much higher than any previous estimate that I have no basis for a revision. It may be fairly concluded that these figures must be regarded with caution, although I was assured that this was an unusually complete tax collection and census. An ethnic division was not available in 1981, and this subdivision is based upon earlier percentages within the several tax units of the district.

5 These are intrusive migrants, mostly Kanuri and Hausa refugees of the Sahalian drought.

conform with the peoples' own identity, and several remote mountain communities identify themselves only by local names. For example, the inhabitants of the village of Wula were counted as Kapsiki in tax censuses, although they called themselves and were locally known as Wula.

Locally these populations would be divisible into two broad groups (leaving aside the category, "other"). In one there are the relatively autochthonous groups and in the other there is the Fulani, large numbers of whom can be found in other parts of Nigeria and Cameroon--as well as elsewhere in West Africa. Each of the nine populations tends to be dispersed contiguously in small clusters of homesteads, while the Fulani are noticeably concentrated in or very near the town of Madagali or the villages of Kircinga or Gulak which were founded by Fulani.

It is important to recognize that although Fulani do not have their cultural origins here they have been a large and culturally significant population in the district for more than 150 years. But more important than the disparate origins of the two groups, there is a vast difference in their respective views of the world at large. The Fulani recognize ties with Fulani in other areas of Nigeria and Cameroon, and as Muslims, they share a religious perspective with much of the world. In contrast, the nine relatively autochthonous societies have markedly local perspectives and few ties beyond the immediate area, and they are very largely pagan. I use the word pagan without deprecation, mindful that it comes from a Latin word referring to a rural district. In short, Fulani are cosmopolitan while the other societies, including the Margi, are literally provincial.

Margi have ambivalent feelings about Fulani. As we shall see, the Fulani are synonymous with a long period of conquest, slavery, and exploitation. Margi believe that Fulani look down upon their style of life, as quite probably some may, and Margi are often suspicious of Fulani

intentions. On the other hand, there is a grudging admiration of the power which Fulani hold, Many Margi, with their own interests and traditions in statecraft, seem to admire the Fulani and their long history of minority control of the area, though this admiration may be tinged with fear and hostility.

Attitudes toward surrounding societies may well be characterized as laissez faire. They are aware of the customs of other societies and on occasion some Margi attend the public ceremonies or feasts of other societies as spectators. However, they do not regard these groups as threats or as subjects to be incorporated. To the Margi of Gulagu these other societies are personified in the Matakam. In general, they feel superior to Matakam who are viewed as rustics given to strange and exotic customs. They are not overtly hostile to Matakam, though they exploit them on occasion, but most often Margi are benignly tolerant of their more mountainous neighbors. They live in worlds which are remarkably distinct, both culturally and socially, interacting in only the most mundane matters. However, the exclusiveness of the several populations of Madagali is being radically tested by population pressures, education, and other forms of modernization. This is a topic to which we shall return in the concluding chapter.

In addition to the resident population of the district we must also consider the Euroamericans, called nasara, who have also influenced the Margi Dzirngu. I acknowledge that to speak of Margi opinions of nasara risks particular distortion; I have tried to discourage answers which were self-serving and attempted to base these views on direct observations, histories, government records, and careful questioning. I conclude that in general nasara seem to enjoy a good, though partially undeserved, reputation; however, it must be acknowledged that Margi have known relatively few. Nasara fall into two categories: government personnel, virtually all of whom were English in the 1959-60 period, though today they are Nigerian, and

missionaries, who were American and Irish originally though the Americans have been replaced by Swiss, German, and Dutch.

Although contacts with European administrators go back to the beginning of this century, they were very sporadic and inconsequential until the 1920's, At that time, the British effectively ended the unchecked domination of the Fulani. Although daily rule was left in the hands of the Fulani under the policy of Indirect Rule, the British received credit for ending the worse aspects of the old regime while the Fulani continued to be blamed for the problems of the new. Several British administrators are remembered fondly; and to this day, most Margi Dzirngu look upon the British as their protectors, a point vividly demonstrated in their vote in the United Nations Plebiscite of 1959 (Vaughan 1964a and Chapter 10 below).

In my opinion, they have been blessed with several outstanding District officers, men who have been able to demonstrate to the Margi--and presumably other societies in the area--a sincere interest in their society and a deep concern with their problems. In this respect the work of Desmond F. M. MacBride in the 1930's, A. H. M. Kirk-Greene in the 1950's, and the last nasara District Officer, Derek Mountain, in the 1960's must be mentioned.

Missionaries have worked and lived among Margi since 1927 when the Church of the Brethren (USA) established a station at Dille among the Margi Babal. The mission's success has been very varied; in some areas, like the large medical center at Lassa, they have been very successful, while in the more remote or traditional areas, like Gulagu, they have found their work very difficult. In addition to the Brethren, a Roman Catholic (OSA) mission was founded in 1949 at Kaya, and it should be noted that the mission station at Gulak, has been staffed by the Basel Mission (Switzerland) since 1967. Margi regard many missionaries with deep affection, and even in the areas of greatest resistance to the Christianization, the missionaries are respected. In the

latter areas the attitude toward the missions' goals might be best described as indifferent and doubtless missionaries have felt unappreciated, but I have discovered that many of them are remembered fondly. For example, although the late H. Stover Kulp, the first missionary in the Margi area, was only occasionally among the Dzirngu, his surveys in the days before the area was opened are still remembered; and in 1973 I found a photograph of him taken more than 20 years earlier which was still kept by the non-Christian son of Ptil Simnda, a non-Christian king. In the years subsequent to 1960 the influence of the Caucasian missionaries has been in marked decline, largely as an intended consequence of the "Nigerianization" of the churches.

In varying degrees each of these three groups is a relevant variable in the Margi world. The least perceived are the other indigenous peoples, but it is the population pressure from some of these groups which has caused the westward drift of Margi and their presence today in Margi villages complicates the governing process to the point of making some traditional practices anachronistic. Fulani are still perceived as a major force in the area and much of Margi politics can only be understood in terms of the way they perceive Fulani behavior. Although it should be noted that this view is at least partially inappropriate today, it is still widespread and must be taken into consideration. Nasara have been major agents of change among Margi. This is obvious in medical care, education, and religious conversion, but no less important are the demographic consequences of highways and missionary centers and the modernizing of the governmental process. The influence of nasara is declining; there are no nasara administrators except in technical fields such as health, and nasara missionaries are virtually gone.

Finally, we must consider that portion of Margi belief which explains nature and the origin of natural phenomena, for these forces are as much a part of the world as its geographic

features and its inhabitants. This must be done cautiously, however, in order to avoid the impression that these people are overly concerned with supernatural forces or even that religion constitutes a cultural focus as it is claimed for societies in other parts of Africa (Herskovits 1958:177).

A "world view" entails the organization of both natural and supernatural phenomena into an integrated, meaningful belief system which underlies a society's conceptual system. It is meant to be literally a view of the world. It is the efficient integration of natural and supernatural forces into a single world view which causes the Margi, and doubtlessly many other societies, to appear religionless. For in fact "religion"--by which is usually meant those behaviors associated with a belief in supernatural forces--does not exist for them. There is no clear distinction between what is natural and supernatural and consequently there is no discrete institution concerned with supernatural phenomena. Of course, there is ritual, but most of it is a necessary part of instrumental acts. Thus, rituals at harvest are not separable from the harvest; they are a part of a single act. Similarly, it would be a gross misunderstanding to separate the "ritual" and secular aspects of the political institution, for it would fail to grasp the most elemental aspect of the institution of "divine kingship."

There are three categories of forces or beings which control the world which may be ranked hierarchically such that each has power over those under it. At the top of this system is iju, the ultimate cause of everything--good as well as ill. Although in some myths, proverbs, and figures of speech, iju is personalized, the term should probably not be translated "god." Iju is not anthropomorphic in habit, rather it is an omnipotent and omnipresent force which is totally beyond the manipulations of men. The only logical system which encompasses iju is the logic which says all must be caused and iju is that cause; a scoundrel may prosper, or a good man fail,

and the explanation is iju. Iju is not merely a just god--it is beyond justice, except that some say that iju will create justice in the afterworld (ivuhu, literally, inside the grave). Although Margi are remarkably tolerant of cultural difference in those of different ethnic groups or of different historical tradition, they are incredulous that there could be persons who do not believe in iju -- some iju. Their incredulity on this point is not that someone might fail to believe in a specific supernatural being--that is understandable --but that someone can deny causation.

The nature of iju may be illustrated in an event in which I was painfully involved. When a visitor attempted to reach my compound by passenger automobile, it was damaged on the underside. We jacked up the car, and as I attempted to repair it, it fell off the jack and gave me a nasty knock. This event was much observed by my neighbors, and I am sure looked more frightening than it was. As I crawled out--not without having someone close a door on my hand--I was consoled by comments of "iju, iju." Subsequent inquiry revealed that two aspects of the accident were commented upon by this expression. First and most importantly, the event had been caused by iju, no one or no thing was responsible, and second, my survival--which had not in fact been in danger--was also attributable to iju.

Given the omnipotence of iju, one might assume that Margi are fatalistic, but this all-encompassing causality is largely a "back-up system" to other more instrumental systems. When no other explanation works, the answer is iju. Although the Margi seldom use etiological tales or myths in general, one of the most frequently heard myths recounts the alienation of man from iju.

Version I (From M. Bitrus Kajil)

Once the sky, where our vision ends, was not as far away as it is now. The sky was so close to the ground that when someone ascended a very high mountain he could even touch it with a very long guinea

corn stalk.

When people prayed to iju he sent his only daughter, Awa, with whatever the person prayed for. When poor people prayed to iju for food, for example, they were given the food. There was, among the people who were given food by iju, a very careless woman who was too lazy to wash the container in which the food was given. So when the daughter of iju was washing the container a splinter got under her fingernail and she died.

See that the daughter of iju was killed because of the carelessness of mankind, iju took the sky very far away from man so that there should be no communion between him and man.

Version II (M. Margima Gadzama)

Long ago iju was close to the people of the world. At that time people did not do work for their food. Whenever they wanted to get something to eat, they just told iju what kind of food they wanted. This request would be made in the evening and before the next day the food would be there. Also before the request they had to decide the type or kind of food they wanted.

They lived this way for many years, but one day a careless woman left the calabash, in which the food came, dirty. When iju came to take it, he saw that it was dirty and gave it to his daughter to wash. When she was washing it she hurt herself and in not many days she died, Iju

then became angry and went up into the sky. When they begged him to come down he refused, and they had to work for what they wanted to eat.

Today you see many people of the world working for their food.

This tale, while acknowledging the supremacy of iju, nonetheless validates the remoteness of iju. Thus despite the supremacy of the power of iju, it is a generalized power, only implicitly concerned with daily routines and the problems of men. Iju is the raison d'être of all, but this fact--and it is a fact to Margi--exists as an unspecified axiom of which all other concepts are but coronaries.

The second category of forces which control the world are anthropomorphic spirits of which there are two classes; yal and shatar. These supernaturals are actively malevolent or mischievous; the good which they do is entirely by indirection; that is, they may not do ill and to that extent do good. Although these beings do not always have anthropomorphic appearances, their behavior is conspicuously like man's. They have appetites, reside at specific places, and, most importantly, they are amenable to human acts in that they must be pleased, angered, persuaded, or even tricked or fooled. Thus men are not entirely helpless with respect to these supernaturals unlike their relationship to iju. The majority of rituals are aimed at influencing them.

Yal are the more dangerous of the two, being capable of causing serious illness and even death. One is very careful not to offend a yal; either by specific act or by inadvertence. Margi do not talk lightly about yal, and they treat their traditional abodes with respect. There are countless yal, most of whom reside in unknown places; however, clairvoyants (salkur) have revealed the

residences of some yal and these are named and treated with deference by all. Some revealed yal are associated with the life of a hamlet, and the abodes of such public yal are entrusted to men called zuli who take care of the shrines and perform rituals when appropriate. The office of zuli is hereditary in the patrilineal line of the senior clan of the hamlet.

There is a tendency for revealed or public yal to reside in extraordinary places--deserted mountains, unusual rocks, large trees, or springs; furthermore, any such place is regarded as a likely place for a yal to be. For example, long ago it was revealed that a yal lived at the mouth of Makwan Valley where a large spring is surrounded by woods. It is called Yal Tsitsila. There are no public rituals associated with this yal as with some others; it is simply a place known to have a yal. Individuals may sacrifice to Yal Tsitsila as a private matter, and one may see i'iwa (pottery shrines) which have been left there. For most people the spot is simply a spring that one may use as respectfully and quietly as possible. Unlike other watering spots where women get their families' water, here they do not linger to gossip though they are not particularly loath to use it when it is convenient. The spot is a sanctuary from thefts and persons sometimes leave portions of their loads there with no fear of loss. There are stories of many strange occurrences at Tsitsila, and it must be conceded that it is an awe inspiring place as one stands in the wide stream bed leading from the pool with the rock wall beyond, high banks on either side, and arched trees forming a roof above.

This description illustrates the extent to which the natural is linked with the supernatural. Although it would be an exaggeration to picture the countryside covered with such places or to portray Margi as treading fearfully through a yal-infested world, they do treat much of their habitat with a kind of respect and awe reserved in Euroamerican culture for churches and national shrines. I take this attitude to be the explanation for the following observation by Barth.

“Behind the little hamlet Dalá Dísowa I saw the first specimen of the sacred groves of the Marghí--a dense part of the forest surrounded with a ditch, where, in the most luxuriant and widest-spreading tree, their god "Tumbi" is worshipped” (1857, II:380).[6]

The close association of a hamlet with its localized yal and the general geographic specificity of this aspect of their belief system imparts to Margi culture a distinctly provincial character. Individuals are tied to local areas or to already inhabited areas by their familiarity with the local deities. A move into an uninhabited area is not merely away from yal but is a journey into the unknown where it would be difficult to placate a yal should it be necessary. In some instances in which mountain villages have been deserted the zuli must return to mountain shrines to perform their rituals. (The topic of migration will be discussed in Chapter 10.)

The supernaturals of the second type, while less dreadful and less specific, are more ubiquitous and are more frequently a part of a Margi's view of the world in which he lives. These are the shatar, who usually only cause misfortune or bad luck and who occasionally are merely mischievous. They cannot be ignored, however, not only because of the ill which they do but because it is said that a shatar can give a person to a yal. There are no public or named shatar, no shrines nor zuli associated with them. And although shatar have no specifically designated abodes, one often sees offerings on ant hills which are the traditional homes of shatar.

Virtually anything unusual which is not dire can be attributed to a shatar. Shatar may cause the silence which occasionally falls upon a talking group, a sudden dust devil or any of hundreds of other insignificant but puzzling occurrences. One type of shatar is more specific; it is

6 Marghí is Barth's spelling which, wiwthout the accent, I following the practice of others, followed in my earliest writing. The word Tumbi, to mean god agrees with Meek's "Marghi of Minthla," tambi (1933, I:242), and apparently shows an affiliation of that area with the Margi Putai (Hoffmann 1963:8).

the mischievous kikyuwi, dwarfs who live in tiny compounds in the earth. They are notorious for causing people to become lost in the bush: for if one walks along a path across which a kikyuwi has urinated directions become reversed, a situation which can be rectified by placing one's left foot upon an ant hill. The most tangible evidence of kikyuwi are the remains of their deserted compounds. These "compounds" are perfectly circular "walls" of pressed mud measuring about 3/8 inches in thickness, 12 inches in diameter, and just barely rising above the level of the ground.[7]

Unlike many other West African societies, Margi culture does not emphasize ancestor worship and therefore ancestors are not a significant part of their world. Only the most recently deceased ancestor is specifically revered and believed to have direct influence over the affairs of the living. Like the yal and shatar, direct action from an ancestor is most likely to be negative, not because the ancestors are bad or because good is not normally attributed to the ancestors, but because failure to perform the annual ritual to one's father might incur his wrath. This view is not at great variance with attitudes toward Margi fathers, though it would rarely be so articulated.

The third force which is relevant in the Margi worldview is man, remembering that each of these three is subservient to and less powerful than those above. Nevertheless, man has his own role in the world. Margi do not stand back, so to speak, in the face of superior powers and wait or even rely upon these forces to direct the world. As indicated in the myth related above, man must work, and Margi are ever mindful that supernatural powers intervene rather than direct. Man may well be helpless in the face of even the shatar, but action begins with man. He is

7 When I first heard of kikyuwi, I expressed some skepticism about the remains of their compounds, and I was dumbfounded to be shown one. Subsequently, I discovered that these compounds are probably the cross sections of partially buried large water jars on the sites of long since forgotten homesteads,

an active participant in the affairs of the world.

Nor is man helpless in the face of some of the superior powers above him. Although direct influence upon iju is minimal, there seems to be an implicit belief that proper performance of the annual rituals, perhaps even the living of a traditional (not necessarily good) life--that these things provide a general security. However, it must be stressed that this is implicit not explicit, for Margi will tell you that iju causes all and it would be pointless for man to try to influence it, and they do pray to iju on occasion and in an imprecise way they believe that it is necessary to perform the various annual rituals. However, there is no question but that man can influence the yal and shatar through rituals.

There is a form of action available to man which seems intermediate between mundane acts like work on the one hand and rituals directed to iju, yal, and shatar on the other; these are the actions which are believed to be in and of themselves efficacious in dealing with the world without specific recourse to or dependence upon supernatural forces. In customary terminology we would refer to this category as magic, that is, a religious or ritual act which is primarily instrumental in intent. For Margi, kuzugu achieves these ends. The term refers not to the action but the material which has the power, and encompasses such diverse items as medicinal herbs, western medicines, protective charms, and poisons. The underlying unity of these items is that they all produce desired ends seemingly unrelated to the items themselves. Misipar is a related term which refers to charms which have kuzugu in them. The proverb, Iju Tlu misipar sal, which translates, "Iju is the charm of man," indicates the superiority of iju to all things, but implies that misipar (and by extension kuzugu) is a potent force like iju which man may use.

Although everyone will know of a few simple kuzugu for common illnesses and problems, there are men called pitipitima who know of and possess a very wide variety of

kuzugu for an even wider variety of ills. He can give a specific medicine for an illness, or he may fashion a kuzugu into a misipar. Literally everyone wears misipar or kuzugu at some time and many wear it all of the time. One extremely common item called umpiama is so much a part of women's dress that they are sometimes made without kuzugu and thus worn as simple decoration.

On occasion a pitipitima may become a very rich and powerful person. One such person residing at Gulak since the early 1970's has attracted patients from as far away as Cameroon and Chad. His compound had clients sitting outside his entrance at all hours of the day and night. He proved to be a most remarkable man who was as quick to use psychology as medicine. As with many pitipitima, he attributed his abilities to iju though acknowledging that one might learn some of the kuzugu. He dated his own powers from a miraculous recovery from smallpox.

The distinctions made here among work, kuzugu, and ritual are not Margi ones. Just as they perceive no sharp qualitative distinction between natural and supernatural neither do they distinguish between modes of action. Simply put, man acts as best he can with whatever he can to control his destiny. The importance of human action is cryptically summarized in the saying, Su thlidlibu thlidlibu angwara su yaya, which means "Things truly learned are more important than things with which you are born." This proverb clearly rejects passivity.

The world as Margi see it consists of an environment from which a livelihood can be derived but which also contains many dangers over which they have little control. Although the habitat is amenable to the power of man, shatar and yal may intervene and cause misfortune, and other humans, e.g., governmental authorities, may interfere with the traditional order of events. Yet Margi are not passive; they react to the forces of nature and the forces of history. In so-me ways this system may seem intolerable in that it emphasizes the responsibility of man while casting

doubt about the efficacy of his efforts, and Margi do seem to show considerable anxiety over the outcome of problematical events. However, the dilemma is resolved in the all-powerful presence of iju which causes all. Hypothetically, the system explains everything. Man acts but he will occasionally meet failure and misfortune; even in the face of this he is not helpless and may resort to the use of kuzugu or to ritual if he believes the problem to be caused by a shatar or yal. Should these fail it is not necessarily a reflection either upon him or his efforts, but evidence that it was ordained by iju. That this resolution is imperfect and that there is considerable anxiety generated by this view is apparent, but, in general, it provides satisfactory explanations for the vast majority of persons.

In summary, the Margi live in a world of beauty, of plenty, of misfortune, and of illness and death; but it is an ordered world, controlled by overlapping forces imperfectly understood by man, to be sure, but not totally beyond his grasp. It is a striking mixture of potential, challenge, and uncertainty.

Chapter 3

The Past

(Labar Zizigu)

The first known written reference to the Margi appears in the chronicle of Henrich Barth (1857). His criteria of identification are unspecified, and they seem largely defined in terms of language. It is clear from his work that there was a "Marghi" language--he collected vocabulary (Benton 1912, cf. Hoffman 1963:8-9)--and that there were speakers of this language living along the border between Bornu and Adamawa. He first encountered Margi some twenty miles north of Mulgwe] where they were described as having "adopted Islam and become subjects of Bornu"(1857, II: Map facing 351), but by the time he reached Mulgwe, where he collected the vocabulary, he was among independent Margi, and his map of the area from Mulgwe southward to Uba is labeled, "Marghi, a pagan tribe."

The fact that Barth found speakers of a language known as Margi does not, however, necessarily mean that the speakers had a strong self-recognized identity. There are four points of evidence that suggest that Margi-ness was not necessarily a mutually recognized quality. First, clan histories emphasize distinctiveness and reveal diverse origins; second, the journal (1912-27) of Hamman Yaji, a Fulani administrator of some of the Margi, makes not one reference to "Margi," referring instead to numerous "tribes" using names of localities; third, my oldest informants agree that as youths their loyalties were local and they were more likely to identify themselves in clan or geographic terms; finally, the more mountainous inhabitants of the Mandaras immediately east of the Margi still have localized names, viz. Sukur, Vemgo, Wogga.

The term Margi is then a label applied to an imprecise population, whose history would be easier if their identity were clearer. There are three different ways one might speak of the history of the Margi. There would be first the general sweep of events in the area as a whole; secondly, there would be the histories of the several indigenous political units located within the area, and finally there would be the histories of the different patrilineages, called fal, located

within the region. In practice, it is only the latter which conforms with the Margi notion of labar zizigu (words of long ago), and it is from these individual histories that all other history is derived. This fact is significant, for although the political units became of unquestioned dominance, the unit of history remains the much older clan. Reckoning history in this fashion is indicative of the segmental tendency which is characteristic of the societies of the Mandara Mountains, The centralized political dynastic tradition is relatively recent--probably no more than 500 years old—and has not generated a centralized concept of history.[1] Although some events in the last seventy-five years such as wars and raids are parts of the traditions of numerous clans, it is nonetheless difficult to reconstruct the history of even a single political unit which is more than the history of the royal clan, and it will take a major ethnohistorical enterprise to write a history of all Margi which is more than gross generalization.[1a]

The first suggested picture of general Margi history was offered by C. K. Meek in 1931 when he discerned three different "strata" which he identified as (1) "indigenous peoples (using this term of course in a purely relative sense)," (2) a "Pabir stratum" from the west, and (3) a Kanuri line, identified among Margi as "Gadzama" who claim to come ultimately from the old Kanuri capital Ngasar-Gamo but more recently from the town of Mulgwe in Bornu (1931, I:214-15). This outline seems basically sound though superficial, for if the clan histories in each of the three strata is examined the picture becomes far less distinct. Further, it would appear that all

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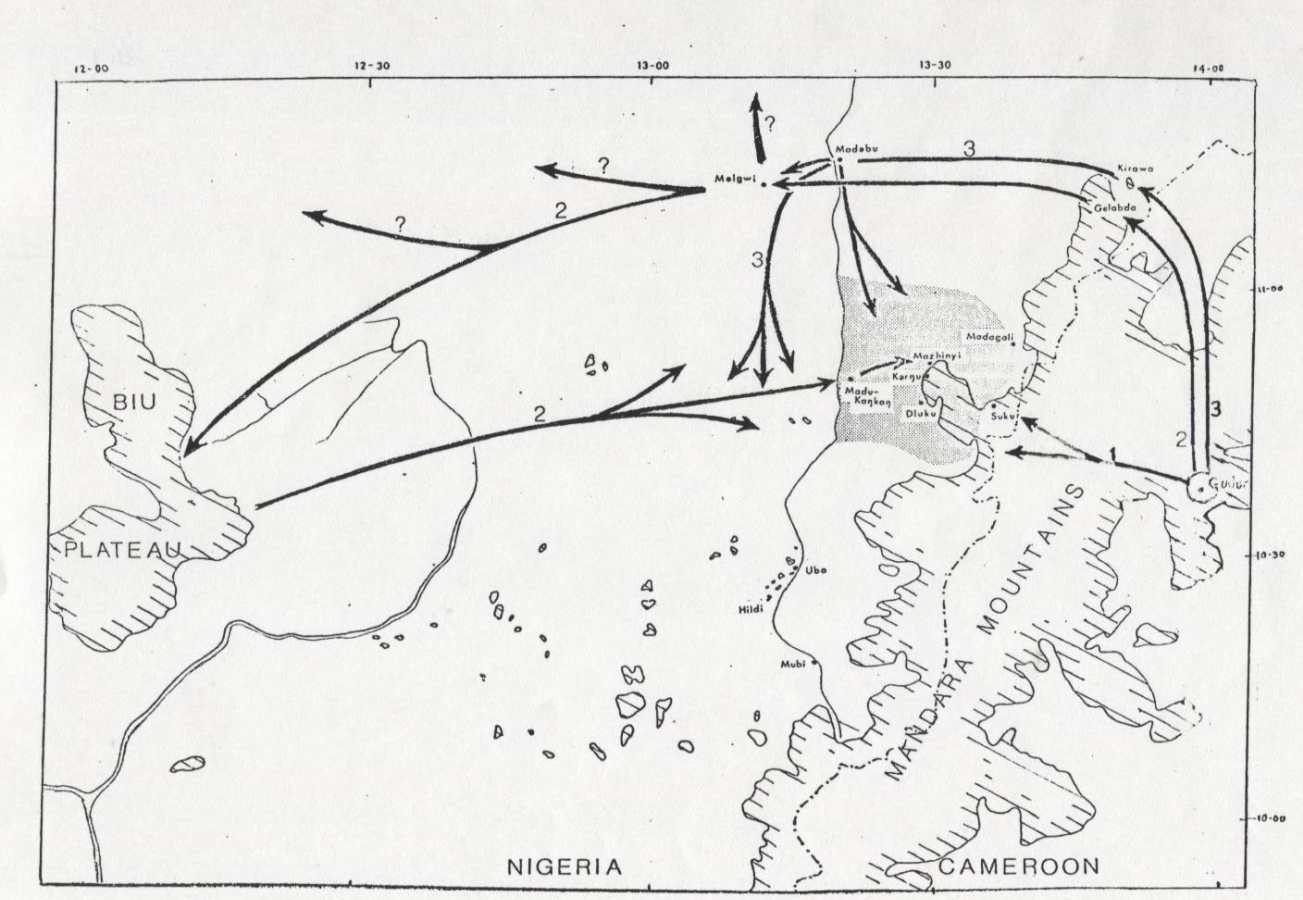
[1] It should be acknowledged that a few literate Margi are trying to forge a unified history, but in some instances this is politically motivated and in all instances sources are speculative.

[1a] The clan histories contained herein were collected from elders and other interested persons by Kulp (no date, but probably 1935 and earlier), MacBride (1936-37), and me. They represent composites of local knowledge in many instances; and taken together,, the corpus is more than any individual is likely to know, since few know more than their own clan history. Accuracy in all history is difficult and in oral history the more so. The importance of this view is that it represents Margi "knowledge" of their past. They will act and have acted from these assumptions (Vaughan 1964a).

three had a common origin, as there are indications that the movement of population has been almost exclusively from the highlands of northern Cameroon to the east. However, it should be noted that this movement has been sporadic and sometimes so circuitous that Meek's notion of unrelated traditions is not an unreasonable conclusion.

There seem to have been three main routes (Map 3-1) of migration into the area occupied by Margi which probably gives rise to Meek's three strata. There was one route directly into the

Map 3-1



Map 3-1

Probable Routes of Migration

area from the Cameroon plateau to the southeast, and it is probably this which was taken by the groups Meek calls the indigenous peoples. However, these clans came piecemeal over a long period and show contrasting customs. They lacked any political authority beyond the clan, although later a dynastic tradition also followed this route, a fact apparently unrecognized by Meek. A second route of migration went north to Mount Gelabda (Golabda in local pronunciation but Delabeda and Dalantuba in Barth's description of the Mandaras [1857, II:369] and Seledeba or Zeladuva on some maps) and Mount Kirawa, the northernmost prominence of the Mandara chain, thence westward and south into the area of the Biu Plateau where they were influenced by the Pabur, and finally turned eastward into what is now considered Margiland. These groups have dynastic traditions which, though showing Pabur influences, could be of Cameroonian origin. This is probably Meek's second stratum. Finally, some clans which followed this northerly route did not go as far as the Biu Plateau, instead they settled around Madabu (Mutube) and Mulgwe where they came under the influence of the Kanuri, or Vwa as they are called by Margi. Barth passed through this area and mentioned its Kanuri influences. Some of these clans moved south into the central and southern areas and constitute the "Gadzama" tradition among the Margi. This is a major dynastic tradition among Margi and composed of many sub-groups; however, it is of little importance among the Margi Dzirngu, the major focus of this work. In the following discussion these three traditions are referred to as (1) the Mandara, (2) the Pabur, and (3) the Vwa traditions.

The oldest Margi fal in the Dzirngu area are of the Mandara tradition with legends of having come from the east or southeast where they had connections with Higi or proto-Higi. These fal were autonomous social groupings who inhabited localized clan-communities in the mountains and probably recognized no wider ethnic integration. Subsequently, two fal with

dynastic traditions moved into the area and precipitated the formation of small kingdoms which are the bases of contemporary administrative units. The Gidum dynasty from Mcakali (Gudur[2]) in Cameroon first established a centralized kingdom at Sukur dominating nearly all of the surrounding area and establishing political offshoots which are the origins of today's Margi Dzirngu kingdoms.[3] The importance of Sukur was noted by Barth in 185l (1857, II.,397-98). The second dynastic tradition has Pabur origins and was carried by a clan named Ishidi which migrated through the Margi Babal area and established a notable kingdom at Mazhinyi in the foothills of the Mandaras. Although Mazhinyi was able to remain independent of Sukur, its influence upon the montagnards was never so great as the Gidem-Sukur tradition.

Although we have noted that the Vwa tradition was not a major one in the Dzirngu area, it is not unknown. The Ishidi succession passed to a clan which had followed the Vwa route though they continued to follow Ishidi dynastic customs. There is also evidence that a Vwa clan, possibly named Maiva, settled in the southernmost Dzirngu area where it was virtually inundated by the Mandara clans and the subsequent Sukur dynastic tradition. This supposition is based upon oral histories collected in the 1930's by H. Stover Kulp, a missionary, and Desmond F. H. MacBride, a District Officer, which I have not been able to replicate. It should be added, however, that these sources have proven highly reliable. Finally, there are documents also from the 1930's which attest to a Margi administrative unit called Kamboro, the founders of which claimed Vwa origins and held suzerainty over an extensive area northward into Bornu. However, even at the time of that writing this was hearsay, and today the Kamboro unit

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[2] Identification of Mcakali as Gudur, an obscure mountain inhabited by Mofu in Cameroon, was suggested by Meek (1931:II, 252 . See also Abubakar 1977:16-19).

[3] It is puzzling that the dynastic tradition of Sukur seems to have influenced only the Margi and not the Matakam to the northeast., as the language of Sukur is more closely related to Matakam than Margi.

is called Bebel and its population dominated by intrusive montagnards.

Migration into the Margi area continues today mostly from the Mandara area. Populations who identify themselves Matakam and Higi are penetrating Margi areas. I do not consider this to be significantly different from what happened in the past, and without censuses, history students, and anthropologists, they would probably be assimilated within a generation or two and become Margi.

There is also considerable internal movement, not of groups but individual families, All mountain communities show evidence of population loss, and sometimes the unoccupied compounds in the mountains outnumber the occupied. The valley of Makwan, for example, had more than 150 compounds within the memory of living persons and was subdivided into two hamlets; by 1959 it was a single hamlet of 25 compounds, and by 1974 it had only fifteen compounds of which six belonged to widows.

The history above is unknown or unrecognized by most Margi Dzirngu and is so remote or abstract that they do not find it significant. However, by working with specific clan histories within one political unit a history of at least local significance can be reconstructed. We shall so consider the history of Gulagu, a traditional kingdom in the Dzirngu area.

The nuclear area of Gulagu was a cluster of clan communities atop Mount Gulak.[4] The hamlet of Kirngu (head of the mountain) was inhabited by members of the Kwazhi clan while Dagu, a second community, was populated by Ghwa. There are allusions to another hamlet, possibly named Dimbu, which is now extinct. Kwazhi and Ghwa are considered early inhabitants

[4] This name, which was given by Barth, is now common, though locally the mountain is called Ngurgaru.

of the area. They are both of the Mandara tradition having migrated from Mcakali via Milding, just east of Gulagu. Another nearby clan community, Mazhinyi, which figured prominently in the early history of Gulagu was founded by members of the Icogwa clan (Vwa tradition) and named after one of their former settlements. Mazhinyi is on a low hill almost in the shadow of Mount Gulak.

Around the end of the fifteenth century, if we are to judge by the genealogies, the two dynastic traditions to which we have referred began to converge on this area, The Ishidi clan crossed the Yedseram River in their migration from the Pabur area, and under a leader named Kangkang and his son, Madu, they settled in the river plain some eight or nine miles west of Mount Gulak. The site, known as Madu-Kangkang, is virtually uninhabited today but is easily identified because Kangkang had the people pile their refuse into a single midden which is still visible. After two or possibly three generations at Madu-Kangkang the Ishidi moved to Mazhinyi and subjugated the Icogwa and two other clans, Zuli and Zhau, of the Mandara tradition who were also in the immediate area. The Ishidi relied upon cavalry to intimidate their enemies and there is still a wide stone paved path up the hill at Mazhinyi which is said to have been for their horses, However, the horses were unable to penetrate the hamlets atop Mount Gulak, and though Kirngu, with its population of Kwazhi, and Dagu, with its population of Ghwa, were harassed by the Kingdom of Mazhinyi, they never were incorporated into it. Their independence must have been inviting, for a dissident group of Ishidi broke off from Mazhinyi and established Tra, the third hamlet on Mount Gulak.

At this point it would be possible to make a heretofore unrecognized distinction between the Margi clans of the Mandaras that is of more functional significance than the three strata scheme. Both the Ishidi, of the Pabir traditions, and the Icogwa, of the Vwa tradition, come

directly from non-mountainous areas. The Ishidi in particular had an equestrian orientation and were poorly equipped to operate in the mountains. Thus we might speak of lowland and highland traditions, neither of which was comfortable or politically effective in the other's environment.

At about the time that Madu-Kangkang was being established in the plains or possibly a generation earlier, the Gidem dynasty was being established in the mountains at Sukur, which is located about eight miles southeast of Mount Gulak. According to the legend, that dynasty, which ultimately becomes the Gulagu dynasty, was started by a wanderer from Mcakali named Sakun who had become lost in the mountains, Desperately needing water, he followed one of a breed of dwarf short-horned cattle called idea to a spring atop a mountain known today as Sukur, a corruption of Sakun. To commemorate the event he took Gidum for his clan name. (There are - no other totemic connections between the clan and the animal.) The inhabitants of Sukur allowed Sakun to take a wife from the caste of craft specialists called dei by the people of Sukur and ngkyagu by Margi. In time, Sakun established a dynasty which came to be the dominant political force throughout the Dzirngu area and which made itself felt even beyond.

Sometime in the latter part of the sixteenth century the fourth ruler of Sukur, Watsu, had a son named Mbrum who was born with only one testicle, a condition thought to indicate that the boy would harm his father. Normally, such an infant would have been killed by exposure, but the story relates that Watsu allowed Mbrum to reach maturity and then expelled him from Sukur, It was Mbrum of the Gidem clan, a royal prince of Sukur, who became the founder of the kingdom of Gulagu.

In his exile Mbrum stopped at Kirngu on Mount Gulak, the last mountain before the vast Chad Basin. His prowess (using the long distinctive arrow of the ngkyagu as a hunter caste) and his generosity in sharing the hyraxes (rock-badger) which he killed so impressed the members of

the clans of Kwazhi, Ghwa, and Ishidi residing at Dagu, and Tra respectively, that they decided to let him, reside at Kirngu and they gave him a malabjagu (a woman past the menopause) to cook for him. When she conceived and bore him a son, it was considered to be a sign that Mbrum was a person of unusual power and they made him their leader or bulama, It is said that the people loved Mbrum so much that when he called for an asadaka (a day of religious observation and it was not honored by the members of a fourth hamlet on the mountain, his people attacked them in their fields and killed them, Thus Kirngu Dagu, and Tra are considered the traditional founding hamlets of Gulagu and Kwazhi, Ghwa and Ishidi the "indigenous" population.

The term bulama, which may be of Kanuri origin, is used by Margi to refer to the secular leader of a hamlet. It is in contrast to two other terms: zuli and ptil. A zuli is a priest and most old hamlets have zuli who tend the local shrines and perform rituals at them for the communities. In those hamlets in which there are significant numbers from more than one clan, the senior clan in terms of residency provides the zuli while the next oldest provides the bulama. This is a pattern which Meek noted for all of Northern Nigeria (1925, 1:244-47). The third term, ptil, combines functions of both zuli and bulama presiding over a number of hamlets exerting both ritual and political authority. It is an office which is subsequent to the other two.

In time Watsu sent messengers to bring him word of what had happened to his son, Mbrum. When he learned that Mbrum was the bulama of Kirngu, he decided to invest him as ptil. Such an investiture is not a secular act; it is a rite de passage, for when a man becomes ptil he becomes a different person with powers both political and mystical which no other person has or may have. Symbolically, he becomes one with his people and the land. In this context it is significant that the term ptilkur can indicate both the kingdom and the kingship. In short, a ptil is

a "divine king." The distinction between Mbrum as bulama and Mbrum as ptil is fundamental to understanding the Margi concept of politics and political power.

The ngkyagu from Sukur came to invest him bringing a verge which had magical powers and a small cape of hyrax skin. These were given to Mbrum after they had shaved his' head, leaving only a hair lock emblematic of his royalty. It is said that one of the ngkyagu struck a great boulder in front of the royal compound and it split into two parts. Today this cleaved rock is mute evidence of the power of the ptilkur and testimony to these events, Mbrum took Kirngu for his royal hamlet and -named his ptilkur "Gulagu" which means "to look for a path" referring to his earlier wandering from Sukur. (The name was pronounced Gulak by the Fulani who came later and that pronunciation has become accepted today even by Margi; however, to avoid confusion with the town of Gulak, the present District Headquarters and which li,6s within Gulagu, I will continue to refer to the kingdom as Gulagu.)

The legend of the founding of Gulagu is partly reenacted whenever a new ptil is invested, for it requires that at ngkyagu come from Sukur to shave his head and give him the staff and cape. Symbolic ties with Sukur remain, and no Ptil Gulagu or royal prince will travel to Sukur because of the ancient injunction against Mbrum. This was a painful problem for one prince in 1960 who sought elective office but who would not campaign at Sukur, though support from Sukur could have been very important. Although the verge need no longer be made at Sukur, the hyrax cape should be, and Ptil Yarkur had a new one made there in the late 1950's. The symbolic importance of Sukur is still felt, though Gulagu is today both a larger and more influential ptilkur.

As ptil, Mbrum set about relieving his people from the threat of Mazhinyi. He got kuzugu (a term which includes medicines, charms, and magical paraphernalia) from Sukur which, when

placed on the arrows of Gulagu warriors caused them to find their prey unerringly. He also made guard-like effigies which he set on rocks overlooking the Gulagu fields to deceive would-be attackers. Finally, he blew a horn which lured the people of Mazhinyi from their knoll where many of them were slain. While the battle raged, Mbrum stole into the compound of the Ptil Mazhinyi and set it afire. From that time the dominance of Mazhinyi was broken; Gulagu had achieved what Sukur could not. This is not to say that Mazhinyi was ended, for it is not in the Margi tradition to fight for territorial conquest. The independence of Mazhinyi continued despite its proximity to Kirngu, and even though it was virtually surrounded by lands of the people of Gulagu. Finally, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century Ptil Jeku of Mazhinyi led his people from the once proud capital to a near-by hill and later from there to a larger hill called Hymbula (in government documents also Chambula and Shambula), the present name of the ptilkur. After this relocation the hamlet of Mazhinyi became one of the administrative units of Gulagu. Today even that identity has passed, and Mazhinyi is only a collection of ruins to which old men refer.

This version of the fall of Mazhinyi is told from the point of view of Gulagu, but it has its close parallel in the legends of both the Ishidi and Icogwa clans. They recount that sometime during the Icogwa reign at Mazhinyi a magical person or force called Silindawa (var. Thlindawa) came in the night and beat a drum which compelled the people of Mazhinyi to follow it into the bush where they disappeared. This is said to account for the unusual dispersal of the "Mazhinyi." There are clans among the Margi Babal and Margi Titum with names such as "Mazhinyi," "Shidi," and "Cogwa." It seems undeniable that there was a dramatic and widespread dispersal from Mazhinyi involving both Ishidi and Icogwa.

As the influence of Mazhinyi declined that of Gulagu increased, until it became the dominant kingdom of the Margi Dzirngu. Through expansion of the area of his influence and through immigration, many other clans came under Ptil Gulagu. These included, in approximate order: Ghumdia, Kwamdu,[5] Madla, Birdling, Gwasha (var. Kwasha), Wala (var. Wadla), and Zuli (remnants of those from Mazhinyi). All of these have Mandara origins except Madla. Not included it this list are individual immigrants from other areas and kingdoms or the clans of the wives of Gulagu men.

The Gidum dynasty (Table 3-1) has shown remarkable dynamism over the years. Although those ptil who immediately followed Mbrum seem to have followed a simple father to son succession, this may be an artifact of memory, for if we are to judge by the events of the last six generations, father to son succession was rare and frequently complicated by dramatic events and struggles. This first appears in traditional history with the fifth ptil, Thlama; there were at least two defections from his royal village. One of his sons, Zhigam, established a Gidem line at the near-by hamlet of Humbili. Zhigam eventually succeeded his father, so the split was not political and Humbili remains one of the important hamlets of Gulagu and a sub-set of Gidum descended from Zhigam still regard it as their established an independent Gidem dynasty, and in time the ptilkur of Dluku became an important Dzirngu kingdom.[6]

Dissension within the royal family and the tendency for brothers to supplant or seek to supplant one another is a hallmark of the Dzirngu kingdoms. This takes the form of non-ritual

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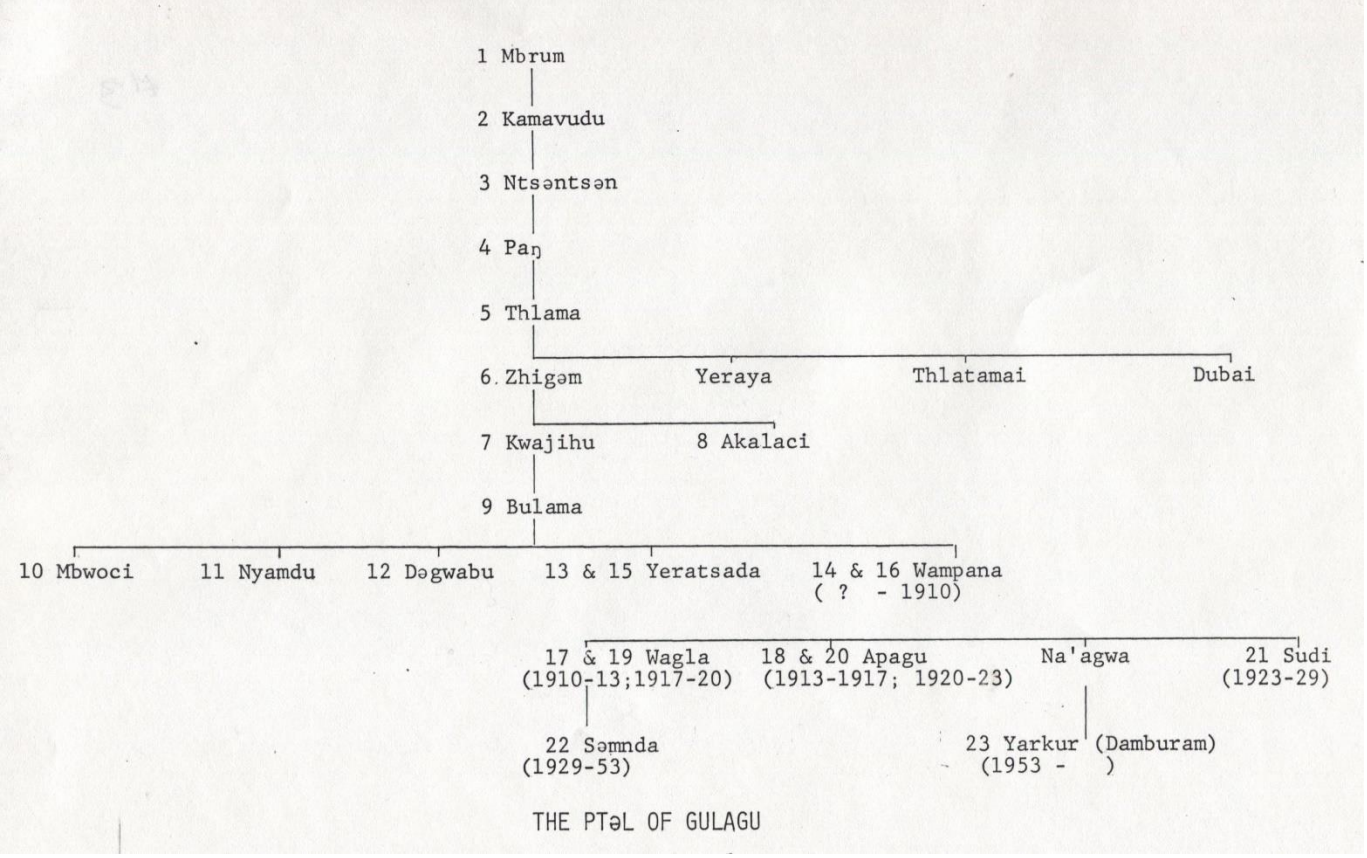
[5] Kwamdu is a clan of the ngkyagu caste, though there are non-ngkyagu who also give this as their clan name. I believe that these are separate clans with a confusion of names rather than a split in one clan. The non-ngkyagu Kwamdu seem to have come to Gulagu more recently following a different route from the ngkyagu Kwamdu.

[6] It is tempting to think of this as a lineage within the clan, but Margi recognize no such subdivision nor was I able to note anything other than historical significance to the division.

regicide, so institutionalized that it constitutes a linguistic category, the thlida. When a group of Margi Babal were asked how they differed from the Margi Dzirngu, they replied, "Dzirngu kill

TABLE 3-1[7]



their ptil." But a thlida is far different from the ritualized killing of myths and idealized tehnographies; it is a true power struggle and no king acquiesces in his own death. This becomes apparent with the sons of Bulama, ninth ptil, five of whom served as ptil with the last two

[7] The order of 2 and 3 was recorded by MacBride in 1936 and by me, from several sources, in 1959 and 1960. However, in 1974 it was repeatedly given as 3-2. The order of 7 and 8 was recorded by me in 1959 and 1960 (MacBride did not record 8), but in 1974 the order was given as 8-7. Midawa, son of Mbwoci (10) was installed by Hamman Yaji late in Wampana's reign, but he was immediately overthrown and is not considered to have been a ptil. These dates differ from those in a similar chart in Vaughan 1980 as a result of work completed in 1981.

serving in the office at least twice each--for in some instances attempts on the life of a ptil would be thwarted and he would escape to lead his own thlida at a later time. Yeratsada and Wampana, on behalf of their elder brother Dugwabu, drove Nyamdu their oldest brother away. Following Dugwabu's death, they quarreled among themselves with first one and then the other dominating until Wampana finally killed Yeratsada.[8]

It is Wampana who ushers the Gulagu Margi into the contemporary period. He was the father of several of my older male informants, the husband of my oldest female informant, and the grandfather of Ptil Yarkur, ruler during all of my fieldwork at Gulagu. No one today is able to say when Ptil Wampana was born or how long he reigned, though it is always suggested that he reigned for more than 50 years. This is not improbable since everyone agrees that he was very old when he died around 1905. His widow in 1960 was not less than ninety and she and four of Wampana's sons all said that he was at least as old when he died.

To understand the historical importance of Ptil Wampana we must briefly consider the history of the Fulani in the region (see Abubakar 1977; Kirk-Greene 1954 and 1958). Fulani had come into the area throughout the period between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries. They were peaceful pastoralists; many of whom had to pay grazing fees to the more numerous pagans'(Kirk-Greene 1958:22). A larger movement came in the eighteenth century at which time they moved down the Yedseram Valley into the Benue Valley. South of the Margi area, probably around a pass in the Mandara Mountains near Mubi, they split into two groups, one passing through the mountains into what is now Cameroon and the other continuing southward into the

[8] Margi at Kirngu say that Nyamdu fled to Bornu and founded the city of Maiduguri citing that the name comes from the Margi word for grandson of a ptil, "medugu." The Kanuri do not recognize this legend and Maidugu is the Kanuri word for grandson of a monarch.

Benue Valley and onto the Mambila Plateau. The latter group eventually came under the leadership of Modibbo Adama who, soon after Usman dan Fodio started his jihad in 1804, journeyed to Sokoto and received a flag of recognition. In return he was to send a yearly quota of slaves to Sokoto. This event signaled the beginning of the Fombina Emirate, later and more popularly known as Adamawa, and it also began a long and terrible period of slaving among the non-Moslems of the area.

Adama's jihad was initiated in 1806 and by 1823 the Fulani settlements among the Margi at Madagali in the north and Uba in the south owed their allegiance to him. In 1841 Yola became the Emirate's capitol and among pagans today its name is synonymous with that of the Emirate. The influence of the Fulani was considerable, but they were unable to dominate completely the mountain areas where the superiority of their cavalry was diminished. They were content, therefore, to maintain these settlements as posts from which they could make raids on the pagan populations. This meant that Margi Dzirngu were effectively contained in the Mandaras, and other Margi were forced to cluster on or near the inselbergs which dot the plains to which they could retreat. The south Margi community of Hildi, for example, lived on an inselberg but farmed the surrounding plain from which they also got their water. Each trip to the field brought fears of capture, and in 1959 old men could still recount the story of a five-month siege in 1899 during which Fulani cut off access to water and eventually forced them to capitulate. One hundred and seventy men were taken as slaves (Kulp n.d.).

The dominance of the Fulani over the societies in the plains and in those portions of the Mandaras bordering the plains cannot be denied, although, as mentioned above, the refuge of the mountains and inselbergs meant that control was never complete. There is another factor to be considered also; those groups, like Gulagu, who had centralized political structures were able to

resist the Fulani in a more organized manner. Gulagu refused to accept Fulani political domination and waged continuous guerrilla warfare against than, This is particularly associated with the reign of Ptil Wampana, reaching a climax around 1872-1874, when warriors from Gulagu attempted to capture Waziri Aliyu who was traveling from Madagali to Yola. The attempt, which was unsuccessful, brought the full force of the Fombina Emirate to bear upon the Margi and Gulagu in particular. The campaign is known in the history of Adamawa as the "Gulag campaign" (Abubakar 1977:26-27; East 1934:91; Kirk-Greene 1958-140) and is known at Gulagu as "the Wazhiri's war." Stone walls which were constructed in Gulagu to keep the Fulani off the mountain and out of Makwan Valley are still in evidence, and the Makwan wall was used in later battles in the twentieth century. The war did not change the political situation as far as Gulagu was concerned, but the Adamawa forces were militarily successful and the Margi suffered greatly. A song text survives from the era:

> Curse your womanhood, Wazhiri's mother.
> Curse your manhood, Wazhiri's father
> The eating calabash of Wazhiri is the eating calabash of Bilanki.

Bilanki was a younger brother of Ptil Wampana and Gulagu's most famous warrior. (If stories about him are true, there is ample reason to believe that he was a near psychopath.) The last line in the song indicates that Bilanki was as good as the Waziri, The significance of the war is revealed in the fact that this text persists, although song texts, which are very topical, rarely last more than a year of two. Hostility toward Adamawa and the Fulani as a group -- though not as individuals -- is still common.

The division between German Kamerun and British Nigeria was established after the Berlin Conference, and this split the Emirate of Adamawa and the Margi. The northern portion of the boundary followed the Yedseram River and thus place the Margi Dzirngu as well as the Fulani settlement at Madagali under German administration while Yola and the greater portion of Adamawa fell under the British. For many years this made little or no difference to the Margi, as the Germans utilized the Madagali Fulani to control the district. In 1902[8a] , the Germans killed the District Head and installed his son Hamman Yaji, a man regarded by the Margi Dzirngu as particularly oppressive. Further, during World War I both the British and Germans armed Fulani on opposite sides of the border, but the arms were also used to enslave more effectively the Mandara pagans.[9]

This period for the Margi Dzirngu is remembered only as the time of Hamman Yaji whose cruelty is literally legendary but also supported by his unpublished journal. Portions relating to Sukur have been published by Kirk-Greene (1960:75) and are illustrative of his attitude and behavior toward the entire area which he controlled.

> 1912, December 27: The pagans of Sukur brought me two cows as a peace offering.
>
> 1913, May 12: I sent my soldiers to Sukur and they destroyed the house of the arnado (Thlidi) and took a horse and seven slave girls and burned their houses.

[8a] Abubakar (1977:127) offers 1903, citing an unpublished translation of Strümpell (1912). but in the original German version (p. 88) the date is 1902.

[9] A contrast to this general picture is found in the person of Mai Maina, a half-Margi Putai who had earlier been a servant to Luggard and who was made a chief at Askira in the western portion of Margiland (,Kirk-Greene 1957:1203; Kirk-Greene and Newman 1971: Part II passim.). Mai Maina, supplied by the British, led an attack which succeeded in capturing the German garrison at Mubi, the area's major administrative center. In 1960, during the waning years of his life, Mai Maina could recount his exploits with dramatic detail and support his fame with mementos including a letter from Luggard and a special testimony from King George V.

1913, July 20: I sent my people to Sukur and we killed fifteen and wounded very many and captured fifteen.

1916, October 19: I sent my soldiers to Sukur and they captured eighteen slaves.

1917, August 16: I sent Fad-el-Allah with his men to raid Sukur. They captured eighty slaves, of whom I gave away forty. We killed twenty-seven men and women and seventeen children.

1920, October 23: While I was at Nyibango I heard that the pagan named Diskin had raided Wappara (a village below Sukur) so I made arrangements and sent Fad-el-Allah with his men to raid Sukur. They captured from them thirty-nine slaves and twenty-four goats and killed five men.

Although the Margi at Gulagu were even more accessible to Hamman Yaji and did not escape his cruelty, he does seem to have devoted special attention to Sukur and, in fact, managed to keep its existence unknown to the Germans and British until late in 1927.[10]

Hamman Yaji's power was not entirely military, for he frequently succeeded in influencing the internal politics of several Margi states. On more than one occasion he was able to capitalize on the institution of the thlida and back one aspirant against a reigning ptil and thereby get his man in power. That he was successful in such intrigues is less a testimony to his diplomatic skill than it is to the intensity of the rivalries which characterize Margi succession. To be fair to these seeming traitors, it should be said that few, once they were in power, were mere puppets for

[10] The Hamman Yaji journal is an extraordinary document which, unfortunately, cannot be published at this time. A close reading reveals a much, more complex and praiseworthy man than his popular reputation would suggest.

Hamman Yaji. Finally, in this vein, it should be noted that Hamman Yaji had some Margi soldiers who were very successful advisors in both his military and political moves.

When Ptil Wampana died in 1910[11], because of his advanced age he had at least thirty-two sons--many of whom sought power. Although the rule of succession permits only the eldest son of a deceased ptil to reign, through the institution of the Thlida, brothers were in positions to "help" events which might lead to their own succession, including using Hamman Yaji's support.

Wampana was initially succeeded by his eldest son Wagla who chose his next eldest brother, Apagu, to be his Makarama (First Minister). Apagu, however, had higher aspirations and, though stories about him are undoubtedly colored, subsequent events revealed him to be something of a Margi Macbeth. In 1913, Apagu informed Hamman Yaji of alleged offenses committed by Wagla, and a raid on Kirngu followed in which several women from Wagla's compound were captured. In an attempt to free the women, Wagla visited Harman Yaji at one of the latter's numerous compounds kept along the bases of the mountains. (Ruins of this compound are still visible at Gwaram and serve as a constant reminder of Harman Yaji's era.) Wagla was imprisoned and Apagu succeeded him as Ptil Gulagu.

A third brother, Na'agwa, went to the German administration in Mubi, and with the help of an administrator remembered only as "Baiza," he succeeded in freeing Wagla who went away to collect his forces and plan his strategy. In 1917 he ousted Apagu and reigned until 1920 when Apagu and his followers attacked Kirngu and succeeded in killing both Wagla and Na'agwa. The latter died a heroic death defending Pt9l Wagla and is particularly revered for it.

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[11] Dates for the reigns of Margi ptil and various events described herein are based upon oral tradition until 1923. In that year Hamman Yaji recorded the installation of Ptil Sudi.

Apagu held power until 1923 at which time he was ousted by forces led by two sons of Wagla and Na'agwa, Simnda and Yarkur respectively. Apagu was not killed due to a chance encounter between the raiders and Hamman Yaji, who quickly discovered their mission and warned them not to kill Apagu, a warning which they thought it wise to heed.

The coup engineered by Simnda and Yarkur was motivated by revenge not ambition and the succession passed to Sudi, a much younger brother of Apagu. (The intervening ones had either been killed in the battles or were allies of Apagu.) In 1929 a younger brother of Sudi named Ijerafu (who was one of my informants) stole a cow from a Fulani, and when Ptil Sudi was told to turn in his brother, he refused. Shortly thereafter, Ptil Sudi was invited to Yola on pretense and when he arrived he was imprisoned and soon died there. In the eyes of the people of Gulagu this duplicity was characteristic of the Fulani, and the incident would prove significant twenty-five years later. The next eligible son of Ptil Wampana refused the office and, in fact, fled Kirngu. In 1960 when asked why he had run away, he replied that in those days the job was "dzau," a word which indicates excessiveness.

Although there were still sons of Wampana who were eligible for the office, there was considerable popular support for Simnda, the eldest son of Wagla. At first he refused the offer and his friend Yarkur considered the position. But Simnda, who had taken the young Yarkur into his home when their fathers were killed, decided that the two might quarrel and lose their friendship if he permitted his junior to accept the office. He, therefore, reconsidered, became ptil, and appointed Yarkur his makarama. These two men, Simnda and Yarkur, proved to be remarkable in their steadfast friendship and their individual accomplishments; eventually between the two they ruled Gulagu for more than fifty years of momentous change. Simnda, a

man in the mold of Ptil Wampana, ruled twenty-four years.[12] It was a long and crucial reign marred only by an attempt on his life in 1939 led by ex-Ptil Apagu, who, although very old, had never given up his long obsession with power. This proved to be his last attempt, however, for he died a few months later in prison.

In 1948, the Dzirngu area was declared "settled" and missionaries, who had for many years only been permitted to make brief visits to the area, built two permanent mission stations in Madagali district. As it happened, both were in Gulagu-a Roman Catholic Mission at Kaya out in the plain and a Church of the Brethren Mission near the mountains. The priest at Kaya succeeded in persuading Ptil Simnda to send his eldest son to school, but in general the children of Kirngu did not attend school in significant numbers until well into the 1960's, and conversions were even rarer.

The symbolic importance of Gulagu to other Margi and the difficulty of access to Kirngu led the British administration to attempt to persuade Ptil Simnda to lead his people off Mount Gulak, but he resisted their efforts. Although there is nothing in the records that would indicate that this caused him to be looked upon with disfavor and there is much to indicate that he was highly respected, this fact was doubtless a small part in a developing storm. In 1953 there was a vacancy in the District Headship and a split between Fulani of Madagali and Yola emerged. Of several candidates, Ptil Simnda's publicly supported a son of Hamman Yaji in opposition to mallam Daihiru of Yola. His logic was simple: Hamman Yaji's son, as a local man, was at least a known quantity while a man from Yola was not. The British administration was both surprised

[12] Local tradition consistently attributes twenty-eight years to Simnda, but it also claims that his reign began in the second year after Hamman Yaji was deposed, which can be documented as late August, 1927, and the District Notebook records Simnda's death in July, 1953.

and angered by Simnda's position and the District Officer, it is remembered, lectured Simnda on Fulani Margi history, the irony of which was not lost on the Margi. Daihiru was appointed to the embarrassment of Ptil Simnda.

About the same time there was an unrelated murder at Kaya and when the relatives of the murdered man tried to kill the murderer, he was protected by Ptil Simnda, though he in no way was trying to absolve the man of criminal responsibility. The relatives felt aggrieved and took the matter to Yola where the Galadima, the father of Daihiru, upheld the action of Ptil Simnda. Shortly thereafter, in July 1953, Ptil Simnda committed suicide by falling on his sword.

The reason for his suicide is disputed and undoubtedly was a consequence of several factors. It is known that he was mortified to have received such a favor at the hands of the father of a man he had failed to support for District Head. He expressed remorse about this shortly before he killed himself and his friends accept this as the reason for his suicide. A government document suggests that his embarrassment at having publicly supported the losing candidate for District Head might have been the cause. Some Margi believe that he was afraid that he would be called to Yola over the murder and there, like Ptil Sudi, be imprisoned; this version was memorialized in a song which I heard among Margi Babal. It is impossible to know what his worries might have been, but we do know that he had not been ordered to Yola and that he had, in fact, been supported in his handling of the case. Whatever his reasons, his suicide ended a long and successful reign in dramatic fashion.

Throughout Ptil Simnda's long reign Yarkur remained his makarama and learned much in his office. It will be remembered that Yarkur's father, Na'agawa, third son of Ptil Wampana, had died heroically defending Ptil Wagla, the father of Simnda. Technically, this meant that Yarkur was not eligible to become ptil, his father never having held the office. But technicalities are

never permitted to triumph over popular wisdom in Margi culture and it was reasoned his father would have become ptil had he lived. Thus Yarkur was the choice of the Council of Electors, even though in those more peaceful times one of the sons of Wampana sought the office as did the eldest son of Simnda. A.H.M. Kirk-Greene, the historian of Adamawa, was the newly appointed Touring Officer arriving just after Simnda's death. The inquest and "appointment" of the successor was one of his first duties. His unpublished journal indicates that there was a very large "village turnout" with "surprising unanimity" for Yarkur. More than twenty-five years later, Ptil Yarkur's wisdom was widely recognized and he was the most respected of all Margi Dzirngu ptil.

In 1954 the split between the Madagali Fulani and the Yola Fulani became so pronounced that it was decided to move the District Headquarters from Madagali town. It was transferred to the small Fulani settlement at the foot of Mount Gulak. The entreaties to relocate the royal hamlet off the mountain continued; and finally, in 1956, a new town for the District Head was built about a mile south of the old one. It is this town which is the Gulak of maps. The former Fulani town was given to Ptil Yarkur's people who finally left the mountain though they continued to call their new hamlet Kirngu. This site was still close to their old deserted hamlet with its many shrines and traditions, and it retained the compact settlement pattern of the mountain site thereby minimizing the social disorganization which might follow such a move. By 1959-60 Kirngu still constituted a strongly traditional homogeneous village just as it had on the mountain though changes which will be related in other chapters lay ahead.

The account herein of the origins and migrations of Margi and Margi Dzirngu is speculative and must await further ethnohistorical research. The history of Gulagu is biased in that it reflects Margi views of events which might be interpreted in other ways. Histories of Mazhinyi or the reign of Hamman Yaji, for example, if told from another perspective would give a different picture; but it is the Gulagu view of events which may give us some insight into their view of the world and, by extension, the view of Margi in general. For the history of Gulagu, while differing in detail, is not substantially different from that of the Margi Dzirngu which in turn is similar to that of the Margi Babal.

Perhaps the most important conclusion to draw from their view of history is that it pictures a world which has proven always difficult and at times hostile. Their experience has led them to expect all groups to follow their own self-interests. Although these interests, with regard to the Margi, may be antagonistic, neutral or even cooperative, they will always be self-serving. Margi do not readily comprehend altruism. Furthermore this perspective does not strike them as unusual or unfair; they accept it as the nature of the world. Although their view of history confirms the importance of independence and self-reliance, values which are manifest in other dimensions of their culture, they are neither a hostile nor excessively suspicious people. On the other hand, they are a testing people, for they are likely to judge friendship by the sharing of life's burdens and problems--rather than promises or mere largesse. Consequently, some can view them as aloof or hostile and xenophobic, while their history reveals an open society readily absorbing others with startlingly diverse customs and origins. But, above all, it reveals a people who meet events squarely, struggle, and persevere.

Part II

The Organization of Margi Society

The social life of Margi is influenced by overlapping sets of rules, few of which are consciously recognized. The rules appropriate to a specific situation will depend both upon the relationship between the actors as well as the goals of the activity. For example, if a man encounters a woman along a path, certain rules of social relations and occasion apply. If an observer understands their relationship and the nature of the encounter, their behavior will be largely predictable. If they are strangers, or kinsmen, or members of different castes, different norms will be appropriate; furthermore, these may be modified or even superseded if the encounter is casual, or economic, or romantic.

The foundations of the rules may, therefore, be regarded as being embedded in the statuses and activities of the participants. These do not constitute independent areas, but they may be best approached as though they did, always remembering that people live lives of undifferentiated activity rather than segments of institutional classifications. In the following chapters we will discuss various types of relationships. Family, kinship and descent, and stratification are sets of relationships based primarily upon ascriptive principles, while subsistence, political, and ritual organization are largely--though not exclusively-founded in activities. These classifications are not indigenous to the Margi; and the English terms sometimes carry connotations which differ from--and in some instances contrast with--the Margi relations to be described, but the classifications provide an adequate point of departure.

The discussion above objectifies rules as though they constituted a known set of laws, but it is important to note that, except in those few instances of consciously enunciated

prescriptions found in all societies, they largely constitute subtle guides to or constraints upon the behavior of a given individual. Rules do not determine behavior; the reverse is closer to the truth: Anthropologists by discerning patterns in activity abstract rules as a convenient way of explaining behavior. In life, an individual is probably unaware of the rules discovered by an ethnographer and possibly unaware of the patterns which gave rise to the pronouncements. He is likely to know only that some ways of behaving are more common or more acceptable to his neighbors, but at the same time he will be aware of less common, less acceptable alternatives. The probability that he will choose one of the latter is a function of the value of conformity in his society and his personal desire to be a conformist.

Margi are very tolerant of variation and experimentation, particularly if there is an assumption of good intentions. They are less concerned with means than ends. This is particularly evident in ritual behavior, as we shall see, but it extends to other areas as well. This freedom is one source of change in the society.

Chapter 4

The Family

(Mjir Wudukyi = people in the stomach of the compound)

The elemental unit of Margi society is the kyi, a term with both physical and social connotations. Physically it is the residential structure and socially it is the group residing therein. The term is usually translated as "compound" and truly it is a compound unit, again, both physically and socially. The physical sub-units are the several houses (umbwa) in which the members sleep. These houses are associated with the wives of the compound head. Within their houses they are in charge and each wife is known as malumbwa (mala, woman + umbwa, house), but the compound as a whole is the responsibility of the mdurkyi or salkyi, the man or husband of the compound. The members of a compound with very few exceptions are the dependents of one adult male. It is rare for even a newly married couple to reside with his father. The mdurkyi is responsible for the well being and sustenance for all of those residing in the kyi. The collective activities of the unit are also nominally his responsibility; however, his intrusion into the particular affairs of an umbwa are likely to be minimal or taken only as a last resort. A malumbwa is expected to be the executive of her house and to run it peacefully and harmoniously.

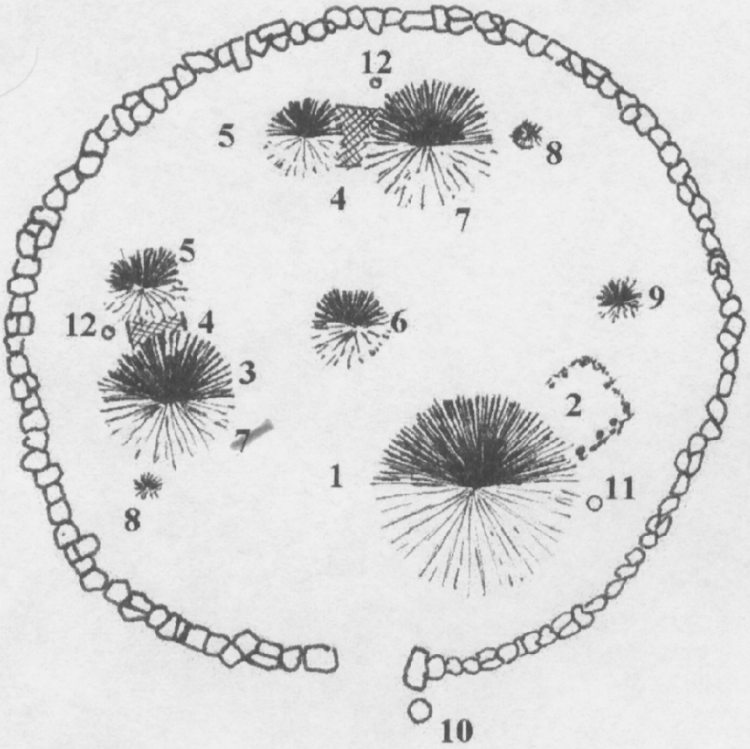
The kyi is composed of circular mud houses ten to twelve feet in diameter with conical grass roofs topped by woven grass "caps." There is a separate house for the mdurkyi and one or two for each of his wives and her minor children. The number of children will determine whether she has more than one house; when she does they are usually joined by an enclosed shelter (mingu) through which one enters either of the two houses. Sons and other male dependents past puberty will have separate houses. In addition there are huts for livestock, granaries and perhaps an unoccupied house of a divorced or future wife. The entire unit is enclosed by a wall which was traditionally made of stones and still is so made at mountain residences. Where stones are not plentiful grass matting is very commonly used and in some

areas adequate walls are made from a hedge of cacti. With increasing frequency mud walls and an entrance hut are appearing. These are practices which Margi consider to be "Fulani"; neither is traditional or common in the mountains.

The ideal layout of the compound calls for the entrance to be in the south, the mdurkyi's house to be to the right of the entrance and his first wife, his mala mba, to be on the left. The houses of other wives are located as space dictates. In the center there will be a large granary for the sorghum which is the property of the whole compound as opposed to other granaries which will contain grain or beans which belong to or have been allotted to individual wives. This great central granary is called the val tsam, others are called val i'i. Obviously, where conditions are crowded it is not possible to have entrances always in the south, though there does seem to be a slight tendency for the mdurkyi's house to be located on the south side of the compound. In the course of the growth of the compound as more houses are crowded in, they must from time to time be re-built, and general traffic patterns change. The result is that the compound is a dynamic structure which rarely meets the model. Diagram 4-1 approaches the ideal. It depicts a kyi in which the mdurkyi is the eldest surviving son and has two wives, only one of whom has children. Madluba is a mat screen which shields the entrance to a house; a koptu tada (father's shrine) is maintained only by the eldest son of a deceased male; and koptu mi is a shrine where afterbirth is buried. There may be additional val i'i in the cook houses and a very large compound may have more than one val tsam.

There are several changes in the format of compounds brought about by contact with other peoples. The oldest is the entrance house instead of the simple gate. This house is

Diagram 4-1



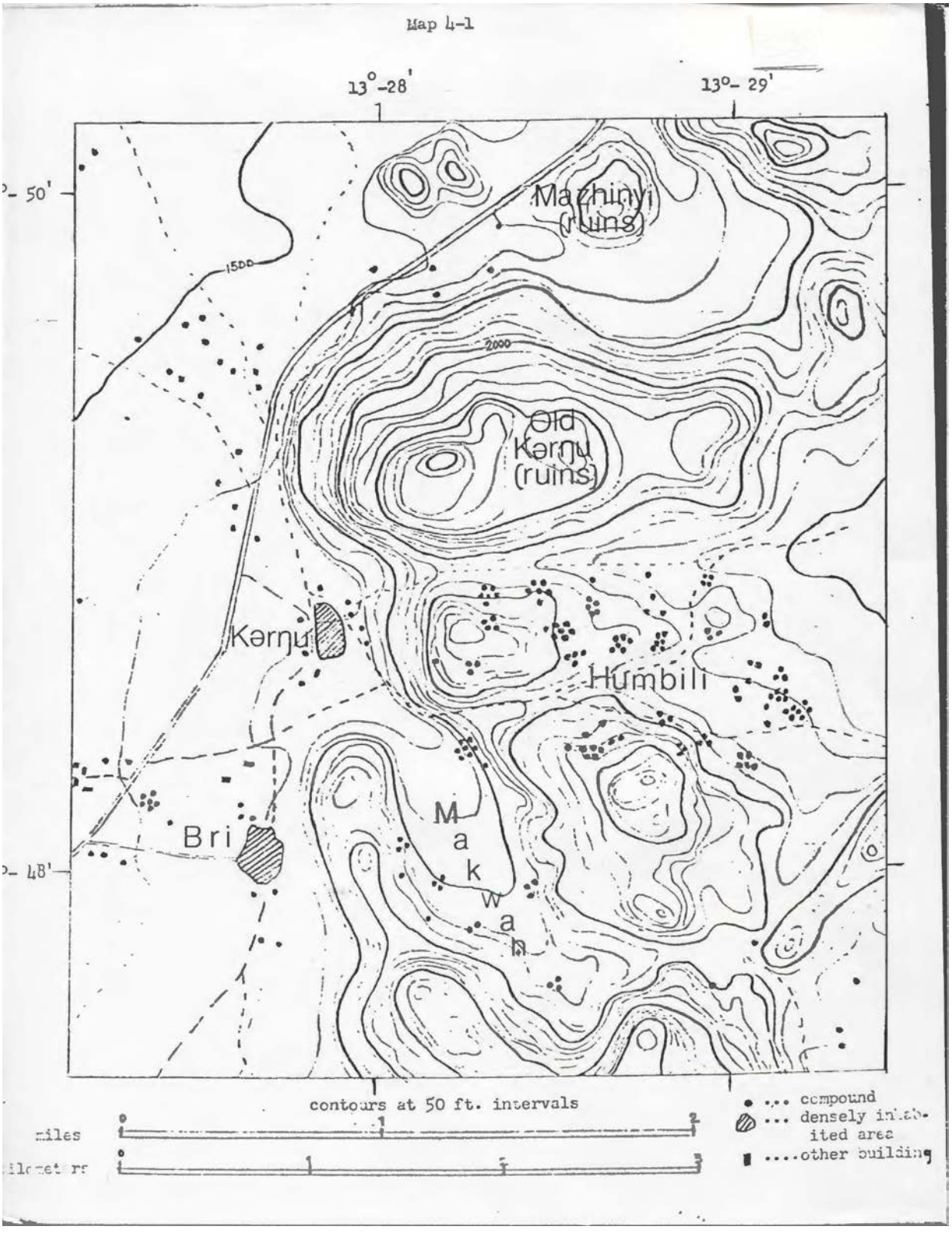
1 House of mdurki
2 Madluba (entrance enclosure)
3 House of mala mba
4 Mingu
5 Cook House
6 VAl tsam (compound granary)
7 House of mala huhu (subsequent wife)
8 Val i'i (house granary)
9 House for goats
10 Kotu bzir (childrens' shrine)
11 Koptu tada (father's shrine)
12 Koptu mi (birth shrine)

frequently the largest in the compound and is often used for visiting and casual activities. More recently one finds rectangular houses with corrugated metal roofs. In the hamlet of Kirngu there was but one such structure in 1959 but by 1973 there were thirteen and in 1981 more than fifty. In the more inaccessible hamlet of Humbili, even in 1973, all compounds had stone walls, there were no rectangular houses and hence no metal roofs, nor were there more than three compounds with entrance houses.

Compounds are clustered into neighborhoods, and since marital residence is patrilocal, there is a tendency for the heads of neighboring compounds to be related patrilineally. The aggregate of these clusters constitutes the giwa, the minimal territorial unit. The term has been translated as hamlet herein, but it must be acknowledged that they are so variable in both size and density that any translation may be misleading. A large compact giwa is likely to appear to us as a village, while one in which the clusters are relatively dispersed appears to be a cluster of hamlets, and a few are so dispersed as to confound translation altogether. The differences between giwa tend to reflect topography, antiquity, degrees of relationship among the household heads, and--in recent years particularly--proximity to highways and other centers of modernization.

Map 4-1 depicts the giwa of Kirngu, Humbili, and Makwan together with the surrounding area in 1960. It may be remembered from Chapter 3 that Kirngu was originally a compact mountain giwa, the inhabitants of which had been induced to relocate by having been provided with a prefabricated giwa at the base of their mountain, which accounts for the hamlet's rectilinear character (Map 10-1). The success of the relocation was very largely due to the fact that the new giwa was as compact as the old. Normally, when families move from the

Map 4-1


Map 4-1
13°-28'
13°- 29'
- 50'
- 48'
1500
2000
Mazhinyi (ruins)
Old Kərnju (ruins)
Kərnju
Humbili
Bri
Makwan
contours at 50 ft. intervals
miles
kilometers
... compound
... densely inhabited area
....other building

mountains, lacking the topographic constraints of the mountainous terrain, they tend todisperse into the plains. This tendency may be having its effect upon Kirngu for it seems to have lost some of its compact quality since 1960 (see Chapter 10).

The mountain community of Humbili is typical of giwa which are composed of clusters of homesteads dispersed over a relatively large area, while Makwan is similar but largely lacking in the clusters due to emigration.

Surveys of the compounds of Kirngu and Humbili are contained in Table 4-1. The Humbili data, although from a later period, are characteristic of traditional patterns, it being an isolated and relatively inaccessible hamlet. For example, there were no converts to Christianity or Islam, although the only truly prosperous man there claimed to be a Muslim, against considerable contrary evidence.

The sovereignty of the household unit, the ultimate authority of the mdurkyi, is so sacrosanct that all other authority seems to stop at the gate. Although there may be cooperation between kinsmen and even neighbors, the independence and responsibilities of the mdurkyi and his family are awesome. Margi values strongly stress the importance of self-reliance; generosity is a virtue and sharing a norm, but all Margi abhor dependence. (Generosity must be phrased in the context of fellowship with no hint of an attitude of noblesse oblige.) At harvest each compound's grain is piled on a threshing floor where all may see and judge. Some are known for their productivity, others for their laziness; these are the reputations of individual families not of clans or villages.

It is true that brothers or married sons and their father may cooperate, but this is much closer to a consensual alliance than an authoritarian structure. Sons who have their own

Table 4-1

TABLE 4-1

SUMMARY OF HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

	Kərŋu 1959			Humbili 1974		
	Number	Population	Mean	Number	Population	Mean
Compounds	54	336	6.22	89	411	4.62
Male Heads	48	315	6.56	67	367	5.48
Female Heads	6	21	3.50	22	44	2.00
Married Households	44	311	7.07	62	359	5.79
Husband/Wife Families	46	311	6.76	64	359	5.61
Wives	84		1.83*	85		1.33*
Children	167		3.63*	203		3.17*
Others	14		.30*	7		.11*
Single Male Households	4	4	1.00	5	8	1.60
Children	0			3		.60
Others	0			0		
Single Woman Households	6	21	3.50	22	44	2.00
Children	13		2.17	16**		.73
Others	2		.33	6		.27
Monogamous Households	21	89	4.24	44	219	4.98
Monogamous Marriages	23	89	3.87	46	219	4.76
Wives	23		1.00	46		1.00
Children	38		1.65	122		2.65
Others	5		.22	5		.11
Polygynous Households	23	222	9.65	18	140	7.78
Wives	61		2.65	39		2.17
Children	129		5.61	81		4.50
Others	9		.39	2		.11
Two Wife Households	15	122	8.13	15	103	6.87
Children	70		4.67	57		3.80
Others	7		.47	1		.07
Three Wife Households	5	55	11.00	3	37	12.33
Children	34		6.80	24		8.00
Others	1		.20	1		.33
Four Wife Households	1	13		0		
Children	8			0		
Others	0			0		
Five Wife Households	1	12		0		
Children	6			0		
Others	0			0		
Seven Wife Households	1	20		0		
Children	11			0		
Others	1			0		

* per Husband-Wife Family
** includes two adult unmarried sons

compounds will defer to their father in matters of public discussion and listen to his advice with respect, and if they are still young they may occasionally seek his advice. Such behavior is considered proper and the respect sons owe their fathers is legendary; but in practice a man who is a mdurkyi is expected to be self-sufficient, and his father would hesitate to interfere in his domestic affairs. This independence, considering the conspicuous values of filial loyalty, may be considered de facto, but the independence of collateral kinsmen, including brothers of the same father, unless one happens to be residing with another, is de jure. The previously noted historical tendency to clan fission and the lack of concern which a clan member evidences for collateral developments of his own clan are but larger manifestations of this basic familial pattern of independence.

The following case may illustrate the delicate interplay between independence and filial authority as it traces a single independent family to the eventual establishment of a number of independent families. Shafa had two wives, Fula, the senior, and Nana. By each he had two sons, Usini and Izu, whose mother was Fula, and Widu and an infant named Uskwa, sons of Nana. When the boys were still dependents, the family constituted an integrated work unit with an internal subdivision along the lines of the two sub-families (Diagram 4-2).

In time Usini and Izu married, establishing households of their own. There were then three separate families (Diagram 4-3). Usini and Izu supported their father in ritual and public matters. Without hesitancy, they would come to his aid and if necessary subvert their plans to help him. They were known as good sons, and they got along remarkably well together. Normally, when there were no crises, the three families functioned independently. The situation might be called a pseudo-extended family, in that there were certain appearances of

Diagram 4-2, 4-3, and 4-4

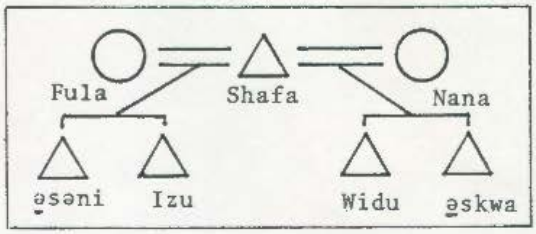


DIAGRAM 4-2

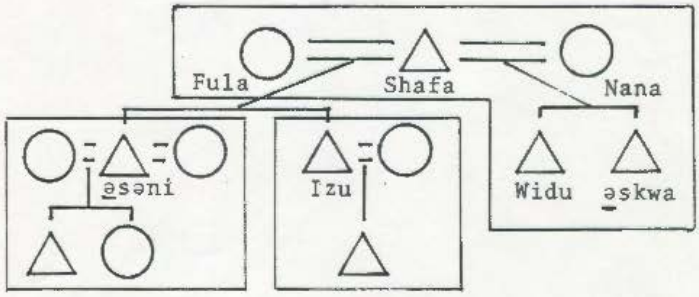


DIAGRAM 4-3

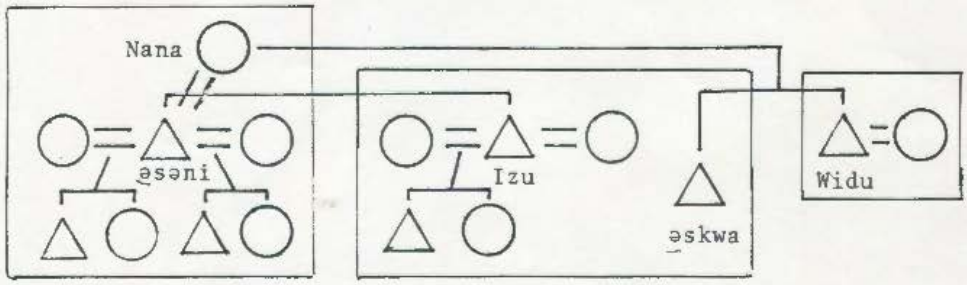


DIAGRAM 4-4

integration but little actual interdependence, except in the event of an emergency. The province of Shafa was very much reduced as were the responsibilities of Fula, but the needs of that family had also been reduced. In such situations fathers have difficulty adjusting to their reduced stature and the new independence of their sons, but that is not a problem unique to Margi.

When Shafa died (Fula had already left his compound), Uskwa moved into Izu's compound, and his mother, Nana, became a wife of Usini by the custom of the levirate. Had Uskwa been younger he would have moved into Usini's compound as well, but at this point Izu could use the extra labor and they were congenial. For a short time Widu also moved in with Izu, but he soon established his own compound. Thus there were three families, each headed by a brother (Diagram 4-4), with the potentiality of a fourth when Uskwa took his wife.

Bonds between the brothers still existed. They still came to each other's aid and could be counted to support each other in public behavior. Usini and Izu were closer, reflecting their common enculturative experience; Widu was less close because Shafa's family began splitting when he was still a boy; finally, Uskwa had become a dependent of Izu's household assisting his second wife in farming. Once Widu established his compound, Uskwa used to spend time there also, and he might well have moved in with him had he not enlisted in the Army as soon as he was old enough. After Shafa's death the ties among the former family members were largely moral. As the family of each grew and he came to rely upon his own sons, the separation became more complete and eventually each would presumably replicate the independence of Shafa. In 1973 the three married brothers were mutually independent. Usini and Izu were close, and in fact known as models of fraternal devotion, but Widu had relocated

his compound to the most remote section of the hamlet.[1] Uskwa, unfortunately, was never to establish his own compound, as he was one of the five young men from the hamlet who was killed in the Nigerian Civil War.

This discussion has equated compound, family, and marriage; however, the last of these is not consistent with Margi use of the concept. They consider that they are married once they have done the mba (to tie) ceremony (Kirk-Greene 1959; Vaughan 1962). Although this may precede the establishment of a compound by as many as five years, three years is a more usual period.[2] This custom, however, is only characteristic of first marriages, and there are several other ceremonies which feature the actual establishment of the cohabiting unit.

A marriage is marked by two customs. The first is the payment of bridewealth (kadlu mala) and the second is a public ceremony or ceremonies. The second never occurs without the first at least having been partially paid and although the ceremony gives publicity to the union which is necessary for public recognition, it is clearly the kadlu mala which is the more crucial to the marriage. Before the government recognized money as bridewealth, the Margi payment was in a medium which lacked general utility. In the pre-colonial period, although iron bars and cowry shells were the media of general exchange, kadlu mala was paid in cast brass

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[1] Sibling rivalry--particularly between half siblings-following the death of their father and the eventual distribution of the inheritance often results in spatial relocations. In rare instances, an individual will move away from the hamlet altogether--usually to the familiar hamlet of his mother. This accounts for the occasional instances of matrilateral ties between an individual and his hamlet. This has led some to classify the Margi as having an avunculocal alternative residence pattern, a classification which in my opinion is misleading.

[2] Estrangements between the time of the mba and the establishing of the household are very numerous and are omitted from our subsequent discussion of divorce. However, just as the mba is marriage to Margi, the dissolution of the bond is also a divorce. This deliberate deviation from the folk perspective is done for two reasons: first, the relationship between the mba and cohabitation is recognized by Margi to be marriage in a technical rather than in a substantive sense; and second, by treating the beginning of cohabitation as marriage and subsequent dissolution as divorce, the statistics are more comparable to those in other societies and are therefore of more use in viewing the Margi institution in the context of other societies, including our own.

bracelets called mzu, thick bracelets made of strings of old red glass beads (mbirza), a long cloth dyed blue (kandambil), and consumables such as salt. The amount of those was variable depending upon the bargain that could be struck between the parents of the couple. One old man suggested the following as a typical payment:

30 mzu

10 mbirza

2 pieces of salt

1 kandambil

Today kadlu mala is always spoken of in terms of money. In 1960 it was said to be fixed at £15, but it was open to negotiation and to substitution of such items as goats, salt, clothing, and iron. The bridewealth is expected to be paid during the period of the engagement. Not infrequently, the father of the bride claims that additional bridewealth is owed after his daughter has joined her husband, but it is very difficult to collect after the household has been established. The bridewealth for a never married woman is likely to be less, perhaps on the order of one-half to two-thirds the normal amount. There is no rationale given for this although it seems probable that the protracted engagement of such unions and the bride service to which a bride's father is entitled may mitigate against the higher price.

In the mba ceremony the bride's father should be sent meat from half a cow which might also be considered compensation, and a first marriage for a woman involves enough special consideration to suggest that the bridewealth may be less because the situation is more favorable to her father. He wants a groom who lives nearby in order to insure that he will be able to call upon him for assistance during the period of engagement. It also means that the couple will see each other often enough to keep the attraction between them alive over the long

engagement for should they become estranged, whatever bridewealth has been paid will have to be returned. Women with educations or those who are, for whatever reason, in high demand may call for higher bridewealth.

It is said that if a man is wise he will save his daughter's bridewealth for a time in case the marriage fails. Traditionally he will use it to negotiate brides for her brothers or for himself, and in this respect it is important to note that the older special purpose currency served the ends of wife acquisition better than general purpose money which can be dissipated in a number of other ways. It seems that the amount of bridewealth required is steadily increasing among the Margi and others of the Mandara societies; some of this is due to inflation, but it also is a consequence of the changing of bridewealth to general purpose money which gets siphoned into the economy. By 1973 and 1981, bridewealth had risen substantially with consequences to be discussed later.

In the short view, the bridewealth legitimizes the agreement between the two families, but in the long run it is clearly a compensation for a woman's procreational abilities. This is made clear in the divorce arrangements. If a marriage should be dissolved without the woman having given birth, the bridewealth must be returned. However, should she have had one or more children this requirement is adjusted. The amortization rate of the bridewealth is somewhat variable. There is general agreement that formerly the birth of one child--regardless of whether it lived or not--was sufficient to negate the need for repayment. Today the number of children varies, in some areas two children are required for the full amortization with one-half for a single birth; in other areas three births are needed with appropriate pro-rating for one or two.

There are a great many disputes concerning bridewealth. Allegations of unpaid bridewealth, disagreements concerning the contracted amount or the value of payments in kind, and the greatest source of argument, the return, or partial return of bridewealth following divorce. Although the relationship concerning divorce, bridewealth, and children is generally known, there is a remarkable tendency for Margi to consider each case as unique. Consequently, the court hears a great many cases concerning bridewealth. In the days of the traditional court it was said that at least two-thirds of the cases concerned divorce and virtually all of these turned on the question of bridewealth.

There are public ceremonies associated with the establishment of the family unit. The farmbwa (to carry to the house) is a very elaborate custom involving lavish displays of wealth by the kinsmen, both patrilateral and matrilateral, both of the wife and husband. It is done only once for a woman. It is more likely to come with a first marriage, but divorce rates are so high that it is often delayed in anticipation of dissolution of the marriage and may be eventually forgotten. It would be an inappropriate custom for an older woman even though she had never had one. The usual custom which characterizes the establishment of a woman in her husband's compound is the mbu'u (to make a fire). This is typical of all marriages except one in which a farmbwa occurs simultaneously with the wife's first joining her husband; however, I have known of no such occurrence. The mbu'u also takes place when a man marries a divorced woman who did her mba with some other man. The term is literally appropriate to the beginning of the family since it refers to establishing a hearth.

The family is the legitimate institution of sexual satisfaction and human reproduction, and the two are closely related. Sexual intercourse is clearly recognized as enjoyable and unmarried youths, males in particular, may engage in intercourse for pleasure only, but

primarily it is viewed as the means of procreation. A husband is expected to sleep with his wives serially, being scrupulously fair not to show partiality. The initiative is his, and some older men reveal anxiety over impotence. The wife with whom a man will have sexual relations is the one who cooks for him on that day or during that week. He usually informs her of his intentions by saying something like, "Come shut my door tonight," or "Bring me some firewood tonight." The so-called Oceanic or kneeling posture is considered natural and a man is expected to have relations nightly though after a time he may take a break from the routine.

The term, mala miwa, is used to designate a favorite wife, but a man who lets it be known that he has a specific mala miwa is considered foolish since his other wives will be jealous. On the other hand the term has its uses; as one man told me, a wise man's mala miwa is the one in his house at the moment.

Both men and women recognize and accept that reproduction is the first goal of marriage. In 1960 population limitation was unthinkable, though contraception was known of by young men who had traveled, and coitus interruptus was practiced by the unmarried. Abortion was known but I found no one who could give a specific instance of it occurring in recent times. Contraception after marriage was incomprehensible.

Children in general and sons in particular are their most precious "possessions." This is in part practical, for they reckon that wealth and attendant prestige will be consequences of children who are hard and willing workers. Sons in particular are expected to support their parents in their old age if necessary. But beyond practical considerations it must be noted that Margi simply enjoy children. There is no greater tragedy than childlessness for either a man or a woman, the loss may be less for a woman, for she can always find husbands and though her marriages may be brief, she has a status as wife. After menopause she assumes a new status,

malabjagu, and the lack of children is largely irrelevant, though she will miss their support and must look to the children of her siblings. At this stage she is very little different from any other malabjagu and she may enjoy a life which is normal for her age.

There is no such relief for a childless man. His social status is intimately connected to his achieving fatherhood. If his wives fail to conceive, they will leave him. Perhaps at first he will send them away on the assumption that they are infertile, but after a few such cases the burden of proof will slowly begin to shift. He will find it harder to attract wives and certainly harder to keep them. He may well have to live out his life as a bachelor though if he has resources he can usually attract wives for at least short periods. His one domestic hope is finding an older wife who is willing to share her declining years in mutual support and companionship. But he will never, regardless of his rank, be a man of importance. All prestige in Margi society is ultimately based upon perfection, and to be childless is to be imperfect, even abnormal. Loss of virility in the aged brings a corresponding loss of position; not total loss, for it is recognized that past achievements are important, but impotent old men are respected on a pro forma basis. Their advice is rarely sought and in secret they are pitied. The man who has never had a child is even more pathetic. When he dies his grave will be like that of a woman. If he has had children but no sons, the grave will be as though he were a boy; the point being that a man who has never had a son--like a boy--has never perpetuated his line.

Children mean certain economic advantages to a family, but it would be wrong to translate the Margi desire for children into a purely pragmatic one. In fact they love their children greatly, they will go without food to see that their children eat and they are proud of their children's accomplishments, however minor. Love is manifest in a variety of ways, and one should not confuse display of affection for it. Margi fathers do not lavish affection on their

children, particularly not on their sons for to do so would invite jealousy and rivalry. Yet men can be seen and heard talking of their children with pride. Once as I sat under a tree with several men my son simply walked by on his way to play with some other boys. I did not speak to him and I was unaware of doing more than noting his passage; yet one man turned to another and said, "If some one were to harm that boy, he would have to fight mdurkyi." This was said with full approbation. Jokes were made about the bridewealth I would ask for my daughter and what a severe sulku (father-in-law) I would be. These are the approved ways of loving one's children for Margi men.

It is recognized clearly that children face risks of survival and the very young often wear many charms, particularly if their mothers have had a history of losing children. This threat is manifest in a peculiar way which seems to contradict their obvious desire for and love of children, for in practice they rarely manifest overt displays of affection toward very young children. Even more rarely do they speak openly of their love or desire for children. This is part of a pattern that runs through many forms of interpersonal relationships. The basis lies in a pride and defensiveness which leads them to feign indifference and thereby decrease their vulnerability or minimize their losses as far as the world is concerned. It is as though a manifest lack of concern or even prediction of failure "diminishes" their loss. There are two dimensions to this behavior: it reduces public discomfort (public embarrassment is especially distasteful), and it may deceive or mislead the yal who might wish to hurt a parent by taking away his child. Thus, the significance to be ascertained from these acts is that Margi care very much for their children, not the contrary.

It is such logic which explains the characteristically deprecating remarks directed toward infants. No one would think of commenting favorably on a new child, for, to use our

expression, it would tempt fate. Sometimes a mother who has had a number of children die will take a new infant and place it on the refuse heap behind her house; then, with conspicuous and dramatic consternation, she may say, "Iju has given me this child, perhaps I should keep it even though I don't want it." She will return to the midden and collect the child, who will be given the name Bzugu (midden). By these acts she hopes that she will have misled any malevolent forces who might want to harm her, and thereby she will have saved her child from their attention. Should misfortune still befall the child, her behavior should diminish the "satisfaction" any evil force might have. To the public at large, she has seemingly diminished her potential loss by her feigned indifference to the child. In a broader sense this type of behavior attempts to retain some measure of control over uncertain events, albeit a negative control. Finally, this type of behavior must be viewed in the context of high infant mortality rates and a high degree of uncertainty in general.

Despite the desire for children, they are not spoiled. Life demands that they be skilled, knowledgeable, and hard working. Parents know that these are virtues which must be taught, and from its earliest years the child is expected to contribute to the household. For boys this means tending goats and sheep, collecting firewood and doing general errands; for girls it means helping prepare the food and working about the compound; and for all it means working in the fields as soon as they are able. The demands placed upon children are relatively strict, but parents are much stricter on sons than daughters, for in a patrilineal society it will be they who carry the line. This results in contrasting views of one's home. Males are unanimous in saying that their mothers' hamlets are their favorites, while females often view their fathers' hamlets--their natal homes-as more pleasant. For young men their homes are places of

responsibility while in their mothers' hamlets they are spoiled and indulged. For females the dichotomy is less distinct and often they do not know major responsibility until they marry.

Polygyny is the ideal marriage except for the few Christian converts and even for some of them.[3] It is believed that its advantages are more children, more labor, and consequently a better life. In truth, the polygynous family has noticeably more security; illness to a member does not so drastically affect the labor force for there are others who can and will increase their efforts if need be. The members of such a family reflect a somewhat higher standard of living as a result of this increased security and they enjoy an added prestige due to the compound of a large land holder. However, this assumes that the family can so organize itself to realize these goals. I knew one man who had five wives, yet did not enjoy the full benefits of so impressive a compound because they were so poorly organized that some men with fewer wives farmed more land and had a higher standard of living.

Inability to organize a compound effectively points to a contradiction in this ideal pattern, for although the prestige and advantages accrue to all members of the compound, they are more important to men than to their wives and as a consequence polygyny is more uniformly admired by men than women. It is not common for women publicly to indicate their preference for monogamy, though it is widely recognized that young wives, in particular, may resist polygyny. Privately, most women tell of the complexities of polygynous households and leave no doubt about their desires. Exceptions may be found among older women for a number of reasons which they can articulate; the sexual jealousy of youth passes,

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[3] The topic of polygyny and Christianity is one which will be discussed in Chapter 10. It has proven a major problem for Christian proselytizing. Recently I have found Euroamerican missionaries more flexible on the topic than Margi churchmen.

their children are more likely to be grown and anxieties about them diminished, they have become accustomed to a cooperative work routine, and finally, they accept the economic advantages of a polygynous household.

It is impossible to ascertain the incidence of polygyny for the society as a whole since no marital records are kept, but the figures for Kirngu in 1959 and Humbili in 1974 are doubtlessly typical (Table 4-2). The higher rate for Kirngu reflects the fact that it was the royal hamlet and the males there were better able to attract wives. The Humbili figures are more typical of the society as a whole.

The relatively high rates of polygyny are possible because of a general pattern that men marry at an older age than women (except for their initial marriage which is likely to be with a near age-mate). By young men remaining single, there are more marriageable females than marriageable males. The age differential of marriage and the previously mentioned definition of Margi marriage results in an overestimation of women in the few census data which the government tried to collect when they collected taxes annually. First, a married female of 18, for example, was classified as an adult, but an unmarried male of comparable age was not. In addition, some men listed as "wives" women who were still living with their fathers and whom their fathers listed as dependents. It must also be acknowledged that male youths are so transient that they often fail to be counted.

Although the indices of polygyny are relatively high, they still fail to indicate the extent to which polygyny is a part of Margi life. These measures reflect the usual technique of counting the number of polygynous marriages at a given moment. But this technique is alien to Margi notions of marriage, for their lives are not viewed as being typified at a given moment. Instead of asking which men are polygynous, it makes more sense--from their

TABLE 4-2

POLYGYNY

Measures	Kərŋu 1959	Humbili 1973
Incidence (p)	50	28
Intensity (w)	265	217
General Index (m)	183	133

$$p = \frac{\text{number of polygynous marriages}}{\text{number of marriages}} \times 100.$$

$$w = \frac{\text{number of women in polygynous marriages}}{\text{number of polygynous men}} \times 100$$

$$m = \frac{\text{number of married women}}{\text{number of married men}} \times 100$$

Table 4-2

perspective--to ask which of them have been or can expect to be polygynous. To this question, the answer approaches 100% for non-Christian Margi. Except for the physically and mentally handicapped, the impotent, and the acculturated, all Margi can reasonably expect that at some time in their lives they will be parts of polygynous marriages. Age differential at marriage accounts for a part of this, but the major factor is the divorce rate which will be discussed below.

Polygyny is a measure of wealth, but not its incidence so much as its longevity. Even the poor can expect to be polygynous at some time, but only the wealthy can expect that condition to last over a long period of time or that the total number of wives will be very numerous. Furthermore, since wealth is one of the attractions for prospective wives, it is a system which feeds upon itself; if a man is wealthy, he attracts wives, and if he has wives, he is wealthy.

Female household heads which appear in the surveys are termed malabjagu by Margi, a social category normally composed of women who have passed menopause. It is the Margi custom that at this time cohabitation between husband and wife ceases, and he will provide her with a separate farm and compound into which she will move with one or more of her minor children. This move is not considered to be a divorce, nor is it so counted in any of my divorce statistics unless menopause was coincident with divorce. It sometimes happens that divorce or widowhood may occur so late in a woman T s fertile life that she assumes the status of malabjagu in anticipation of her menopause.

There are two notable exceptions to the separation of husband and wife at menopause. When a man becomes very old and especially if he becomes impotent, his last wife may stay with him as they grow old together. It is also the case that converts either to Islam or Christianity may sometimes continue to cohabit after the wife's menopause. In several such

marriages that I have known, the relationship between husband and wife became much more mutually supportive than it had been or than that which characterize a typical Margi marriage.

It should be noted that the transition from wife to malabjagu is not always easy, although this never is mentioned in abstract discussions about Margi lifestyle. I am convinced that young Margi are virtually ignorant of such difficulties. Interviews with younger married women always revealed an incredulity that any woman would want to remain with her husband when she could no longer bear children. Yet, I have known older women who attempted to hide the fact that their menstruation had ceased and others who refused to leave their husbands' compounds until they were put out. These are in the minority and most malabjagu seem to accept their status with equanimity and in some cases, perhaps, with relief. Some malabjagu continue to have sexual relations with men, particularly older men who are known as sal tsaka (fence-post husband), though the relationship may be, and in time usually becomes, platonic.

Male and female roles are dichotomized in Margi society, and husbands and wives to a large extent live in different social worlds. Though these roles must articulate to make the family an efficient unit, wives in this patrilocal society are very much on their own with both the independence and loneliness that that implies. A husband and wife are rarely seen talking about anything other than the affairs of the compound of their mutual concern. In most matters they go their separate ways; a man is never seen walking with his wife to a social occasion. This separation is in large measure related to the role specialization which demarcates the activities of each so that there is little occasion for them to be thrown together except as they work in their fields, but it also relates to the fact that men are surrounded by kinsmen, ties to whom are stronger and more permanent than those to wives. Nonetheless, one might wonder why there is such a conspicuous lack of casual conversation and contact between most

polygynous men and their wives. The overt reason for this behavior seems to arise from the number of conditions which inhibit a man from being too friendly with his wife. The first of these reasons which any male Margi would offer is the jealousy between co-wives and their readiness to allege favoritism. Co-wives only rarely get along harmoniously. Even when a man has only one wife he is probably anticipating adding another and governs his behavior accordingly. A woman may avoid a man who is known to be particularly close to his wife, for she will assume that it bespeaks a difficult future relationship for her should she decide to become his second wife.

It is this fact which causes men to subdivide their fields and apportion the work according to the size of the sub-families within the compound, despite the fact that the Margi ideal is for a farm without such divisions. Of the 23 polygynous families in Kirngu in 1959 only two were not subdivided. Such apportionment of work contributes to the independence of women. It not only establishes them as semiautonomous members of the compound, but it limits the work for which they may be responsible and thereby opens the way for them to work on their own. The division of the field is literally a divisive act, and it means that each wife is careful to do no more proportionally than any other wife. In such cases the slowest wife sets the standard for all. More importantly, it reduces the corporate concept, and a compound with fields so divided inevitably sets the goals at a comfortable minimum. The consequence is that wives, particularly those who are industrious, have time remaining after they have completed their family obligations. In such cases they are free to farm on their own and the profits belong to them. They may clear new land for such ventures, but it usually comes from their husbands' land. It is a difficult position for a man; he is faced with the demands and accusations of competing wives who can virtually force upon him a minimum standard of familial work, then

demand land to farm independently. Refusal may not only result in the loss of ones wives but mark him as a stingy man. Additionally, stinginess is a major vice for Margi, and such behavior risks criticism from other men and makes it difficult to get other wives.

The absence of cooperation among wives is the bane of husbands and remedy is almost beyond their control. Its absence is not considered a failing 'of the husband so much as another manifestation of the character which men ascribe to women and which to a large extent they accept. On the other hand when exceptions occur, as in the two cases at Kirngu, these are regarded as consequences of the personality of the wives concerned and they are likely to be referred to as models for other women. There are other divisive factors which are of equal importance but are not likely to be perceived by the persons involved. The first relates to the contrasting roles played by husband and wife as parents, There is a dichotomy between authority inherent in the father's role and the support characteristic of the mother's, which places them on opposite sides, so to speak, in their attitudes and behavior toward their children. There is no evidence of ambivalence about these roles perhaps because they are complementary alternatives, but perhaps also because husband and wife do not have to submerge their differences in a relationship of mutual equality. From the point of view of children this dichotomy means that each parent can be reasonably expected to act in a predictable way. In practice, this usually means that mama can be counted upon to give comfort and relief from the direction, supervision, and criticism of tada. Despite benefits this might have for the child, it inevitably inserts an element of constraint between the spouses which is handled by withdrawal rather than antagonism, for each accepts the role of the other.

A final factor should be mentioned as contributing to potential discord between husbands and wives. There is a conspicuous lack of perceived mutual dependency between the two as

individuals. To be sure, Margi like all patrilineal societies are dependent upon women for the continuance of the lineage, but that is a dependence upon the sex and not upon individual women--there being a ready supply, no one feels dependent upon his wife. But this also affects wives, and they feel free to leave a husband when they wish. Children bring mutual concerns but the principle of patrilineality robs this of some of its force. Only advancing age really seems to bind a husband and wife, more as a consequence of increased understanding than of reduced likelihood of either finding other mates.

The emotional, economic, and legal independence of women, coupled with the endemic discord within the family, in the absence of any overriding considerations, produces extremely frangible marriages. Although the source of this instability seems to lie in the-conditions surrounding females and their behavioral options, it should be noted that men accept the situation as normal and on their own dismiss wives freely. The high number of stolen wives and the simple fact that divorced women are remarried in a relatively short time indicate that men contribute to the fragile relationship.

Since bridewealth comes either from the husband or his family and since it is the sine qua non of marriage, it would seem to follow that the male would have control of marital stability. In a narrow legal sense he often does. For example, should a wife elope with another man, her husband can demand that she be returned rather than accept a bridewealth settlement, and he will be upheld by the court unless there the wife can produce grounds for divorce. However, the independence of wives and the impact that one demanding wife can have upon a household inevitably means that women, not men, are the initiators of most divorces.

Men seem resigned to such behavior as though it were characteristic of the female sex. Although a man may get angry with another who steals his wife, he is rarely too proud to take

her back. In fact a relatively high percentage of women seem to remarry former husbands; of twenty-eight women in Table 4-3, five had remarried husbands from whom they had been divorced.

It should be emphasized that the instability of marriage does not mean that family life is lacking in continuity. The principle of patrilineal descent means that children belong to the father and his lineage. Consequently, children do not normally leave their natal home when their parents are divorced. The other wives of one's father and the wives of one's father's brothers are all expected to act as mother surrogates, and in Margi terminology they are addressed by the same term one uses for one's biological mother. No one assumes, of course, that these women will be the true equivalent of one's own mother, but they can be significant mother substitutes in individuals' lives. Nor is this system predicated only upon divorce, for the high rates of maternal mortality also necessitate institutional mother surrogates. There is a security built into the family which helps alleviate the problems accompanying broken marriages. In short, divorce is a culturally acceptable risk of domestic life, and in most instances it causes little more than passing notice unless there is a dispute over bridewealth.

One potential problem arises when there is a child too young--under six years--to leave its mother. In such a case, the child accompanies the mother but returns when it is of age. This may lead to legal disputes although the law is seemingly clear. I once witnessed a case in which a girl had attained an age of twelve without returning to her father's hamlet. At that age she did not wish to go, and her maternal relatives and her mother maintained that her father had neglected her by not taking her before and that all he wanted now was the bridewealth that she would bring. His behavior was not above criticism, but in the end he was awarded the girl, who was literally dragged off toward his giwa.

Table 4-3

SUMMARY OF MALABJAGU DATA FROM KəRŋU

Table 4-3

Women	Children by Husband Living/Dead						Total Children T/L/D	Stated Reason for Divorce											
	1	2	3	4	5	6		Personal	Infertility	Return to Husband	Love Affair	Husb. Too Poor	Told to Leave	Desertion	Parental Objtn.	Dspt. Abt. Islam	Unspecified	Never Divorced
1	4/5+						9/4/5											X
2	5/3*						8/5/3											X
3	#4	0	0	3/4*	0		7/3/4	2		1							1	
4	4/1*	0/3+					8/4/4											X
5	7/5	0	0				12/7/5	1					1				1	
6	5/2+						7/5/2											X
7	0	#5	0	3/5*	0+		8/3/5	1		1		1						
8	3/4*						7/3/4											X
9	2/5						7/2/5									1		
10	6/5*						11/6/5											X
11	1/3*	0	2/1*	1/0			8/4/4	1									1	
12	#3	1/0	5/5+				11/6/5			1				1				
13	0/5	3/0+					8/3/5		1									
14	0/1*	0	0	#6	0	0	1/0/1			1	2	1						
15	0	3/7					10/3/7						1				1	
16	0/1	2/2*	1/1*				7/3/4	1										
17	#3	1/0	7/0				9/8/1			1				1			1	
18	0/3	1/0	0	0	0	0	4/1/3	1	1						2		2	
19	0	4/5	0	0+			9/4/5	3										
20	0	6/4+					10/6/4				1							
21	2/4						6/2/4	1										
'22	0	0	1/5+				6/1/5		2									
'23	2/9+						11/2/9											X
'24	5/0+						5/5/0											X
'25	0	0/11+					11/0/11	1										
'26	2/1+						3/2/1											X
'27	0	2/0	0*	0	1/0*	0/1+	4/3/1	1			2							
'28	0	3/3*	1/0+				7/4/3		1									
(74 marriages incl. 5 remarriages)							214/99/115	13	5	5	5	2	4	2	2	1	7	9

$\bar{X}$ (all women) 2.6 Husbands 7.6/3.5/4.1
$\bar{X}$ (under 65) 2.7 Husbands 8.0/3.9/4.1 (49% living)
$\bar{X}$ (over 65) 2.4 Husbands 6.7/2.4/4.3 (36% living)

\+ Marriages terminated by menopause 16
* Marriages terminated by death 14
All others terminated by divorce 44
' Women over 65 years of age 7

Although the divorce measures (Table 4-4) are based upon small samples, there is every reason to believe that they are reasonably representative. In the first instance the rates among pagan populations, Kirngu in 1959-60 and Humbili in 1973-74, are entirely comparable (95.2 vs. 94.1); additionally, Margi, themselves, described a situation consistent with the statistical revelations. The divorce rate in 1959-60 was more than ten times the divorce rate in the United States for the same period. (By 1974 the U.S. rate had increased so that the difference was less, but the pagan rate was still more than five times greater.)

Table 4-4

MEASURE OF DIVORCE

Rates	Karnu 1959-60	Humbili 1973-74
per 1000 population	23.8	19.5
per 1000 wives	95.2	94.1

Table 4-4

Marital histories of post-menopausal women leave the same impression though they cannot be converted to annual rates. It should be recognized, in addition, that such a group of women would have a lower rate than a group of younger women, as the probability of divorce is much higher among younger married women. Data from a cohort of post-menopausal women is presented in Table 4-3. It may be seen that these twenty-eight women count for

seventy-four wives, which in itself reveals how divorce (and widowhood) tends to maximize wives in the society and has the effect of circulating the women among the men.

Annual divorce rates such as those for 1959-60 and 197374 are not common in anthropological literature, although they are more easily compared to the statistics readily available from industrial societies. Instead, life history materials are used to give three measures: A, divorce expressed as a percentage of the total marriages in the sample; B, divorce as a percentage of all marriages terminated by death and divorce in the sample; and C, divorce as a percentage of all marriages except those terminated by death. The data in Table 4-3 yield the following measures:

A 59.5

B[4] 75.9

C 73. 3

Further, it should be noted that only one-third of the women had never been divorced. These are very high measures-even when compared to other African data (Cf. Mitchell 1967: 23), though statistics based upon data from one sex only must be used with discretion.[5] The stated causes for divorce in the marital histories are very numerous, though by far the largest number could be attributed to what might be classified as personality problems. By the accounts of both men and women and from observation, it seems evident that not less than two-thirds of the divorces are instigated by women. But women rarely leave husbands without provocation, and from the Margi marriages which I have been able to observe over a period of

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[4] This figure, under normal circumstances, should be comparable to an annual ratio, and though these data may be somewhat biased in favor of stability by using only postmenopausal women this measure is close to the ratio of 80.0 from the 1959-60 year.

[5] For an excellent discussion of this topic see Barnes 1967:47-99.

time and which ended in divorce, it is clear that the precipitating event of the divorce is often remotely related to the cause. In brief, a trivial event may precipitate a wife's leaving, though much more serious, longer term problems may have undermined the ties of affection and dependency between the couple. In this respect, the role of infertility in divorce deserves special attention.

It is to be noted that 86.75% of childless marriages in Table 4-3 ended in divorce, and 82.5% of the marriages which ended in divorce produced children below the mean number. However, we must note that a marriage which ends in divorce will presumably be shorter than one which does not and may, therefore, have less opportunity to produce children. But the fact that all Margi suggest infertility as the first hypothetical reason for divorce provides ample reason for believing that there may be a causal relationship in many of these cases.

These data may also be used to look at the obverse of this relationship, that the relationship between fertility and marriage (Cf. Cohen 197l:149). In this case we may also include some additional data (Table 4-5) from the Margi Titum which was collected prior to 1960 by Mrs. John Grimley. (These data do not include reasons for terminating marriages so they cannot be used in a direct discussion of divorce.) In both of these tables the relationship between fertility and marriage is evident. The marital histories of the women at the extremes of fertility are striking. Those who had had four children or fewer had been married an average of 4.5 times, while those who had had eleven or more children averaged only 2.1 marriages. The correlations between marriages and births are -.37 and -.46 for Gulagu and Uba respectively (each significant to about the .05 level and somewhat higher when combined). This indicates that the more fertile a woman is the fewer times she is likely to be married, which tends to confirm the Margi statement that infertility might lead to divorce.

TABLE 4-5

SUMMARY OF MALABJAGU DATA FROM UBA

	Children by Husband						Total Children
	1	2	3	4	5	6	T/L/D
A	17	1	0				18/7/11
B	5	1					6/4/2
C	2	0	0	0			2/0/2
D	1	9	0				10/3/7
E	6	3	0				9/5/4
F	7						7/4/3
G	2	8					10/6/4
H	12	1					13/6/7
I	0	5	5				10/5/5
J	2	0	0	0	0	1	3/0/3
K	0	2	0				2/0/2
L	1	10					11/2/9
M	1	1	5				7/4/3
N	1	0	0	0			1/1/0
O	5	3	0				8/5/3
	(44 Husbands)						117/52/65
$\bar{X}$	2.9 Husbands						7.8/3.5/4.3 (44% living)

Table 4-5

The ubiquity of high infant and child mortality is widely recognized and accepted as the normal course of events. For this reason, should it be necessary to return bridewealth in a divorce, a distinction is not formally made between children who live and those who die. Yet the information in Table 4-5 suggest that this, too, is a factor in mate selection, for there is a

higher correlation (-.56) between marriages and living children.[6] However, in only one instance have I found a divorce which was specifically stated to have been caused by the death of children.

This raises, once again, the topic of the cause of divorce. What is suggested here is that infertility and child death produce strains within the family which may erupt as disputes on a variety of topics, thereby causing a divorce. Initially, infertility is attributed to the female; but if a succession of wives follows the same pattern, a man will find that a de facto recognition of his infertility will develop. In point of fact, there seem to be very few instances of total infertility, though there are a number of marriages in which all or virtually all children die. Even more than infertility, the death of children places stresses on a marriage. With low fertility there comes resignation, but for those who have children which die there is the tragedy of unfulfilled expectations which inevitably haunts both father and mother.

These correlations help provide some logic--however devious--to the rapid turnover of spouses. Normally divorce creates a lack of continuity in the patrilineage, but to a great extent Margi overcome this by quickly remarrying and, importantly, showing selectivity for fertile spouses in the process. As a consequence, neither the continuity of their patrilineages nor the rate of growth seems to suffer from the unusually high divorce rate.

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Margi marriage is strikingly fragile and the compound, consequently, a markedly dynamic--and sometimes unstable--group. This may stem from the extreme ease of divorce,

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[6] The data in Table 4-3, while indicating the same general direction to the relationship, are not statistically significant on this point, doubtlessly because seven of the women were very old and had outlived an unusually high percentage of their children.

the ever present rivalry between wives, or the stresses engendered by the necessity of achievement which each mdurkyi must bear. But whatever the cause, the Margi are aware of the situation and regard it as a problem. Those who live in consistently harmonious compounds are known as fortunate. In reality, most of day to day living is relatively peaceful, and it would be erroneous to end this discussion with the impression that the Margi family is "pathological."

It is a delicately balanced grouping. Its roles are articulated in such a way that there is a complementary organization which, from a structural perspective, is idyllic. When it operates well, there is considerable validity to that view. I can vividly remember one rainy July morning when I ducked into the compound to get out of a shower and found the entire household sitting in the entrance house. The mdurkyi and his eldest son were sharing a pot of beer; his four wives and the wife of his son were casually shelling beans, repairing household items, fashioning jewelry, or tending the six children in evidence--some of whom kept running in and out of the rain with unrestrained glee. The group was gossiping, laughing, teasing, and in general enjoying their activities. It was not only a pleasant scene, it was, obviously, a memorable visit. Fifteen years later, my friend was dead, but his son was the mdurkyi of a large compound with four wives which lived in the same harmony that had characterized his father's household.

Chapter 5

The Clan

(Fal)

Kinship, although ubiquitous, is unobtrusive in Margi life. It is the ambiance of most social intercourse, but few transactions are determined by it. This seems in marked contrast to many African societies in which the authoritarian organization of kinship groupings constitutes a major force in ordering the society. Although Margi have formal patrilineal clans, the authority usually thought to be implicit in such groupings is weak. This is not to say that the authority of the clan is non-existent or unimportant, but it is an attempt to stress that such authority and importance as may be attributed to the clan is more moral than jural.

A network of terminology demarcates persons whom Margi regard as kinsmen of varying and contrasting degree. The terminology establishes the total world of kin without regard to its organization into clan or its spatial distribution into hamlet. The social world of a Margi is largely peopled by kinsmen, consanguineal and affinal, who are designated by the terms indicated in the Appendix.

The rules of kinship are formal and seemingly inflexible. They provide ways of relating to a large number of individuals, and as such they offer a kind of map of presumed social relations. However, one should not confuse rules with usage, for the pragmatism so commonly observed in Margi is also characteristic of kin behavior and we find many deviations in practice. Some deviation is idiosyncratic, but much can be seen to be patterned.

The first patterned deviation from the rules is that all kinsmen grouped under the same term are not treated the same way--idiosyncratic variations apart. This arises from the consequences of having unilinear descent even though certain terms, notably the "cousin" and sibling terms (zamu and ngwamu), are bilateral in nature. We shall give this more attention in the following discussion of terminology within patrilineages (p. 114).

A second deviation is more pragmatic and concerns itself with discrepancies between status as determined by terminology and status as determined by age. Margi men, if they are prosperous enough to retain wives and add new wives, may father children over protracted periods of time. A man may very well father children after his eldest children are themselves parents. Consequently, it often happens that an individual will be older than some of its parents' siblings. By the rules of kin terminology, the siblings of one's father should be addressed as da or ma, the terms also used for father and mother, but for those of equal or younger age the situation is perceived as patently ridiculous and no such terminology is used. They may know the correct terminology but they use none and behave toward them more as siblings which is the age-appropriate behavior.

There is an emphasis upon status and terminology which extends farther than genealogical relationship, in that any very senior/junior pair (either in terms of age or status) are likely to use the term ciji (grandparent and grandchild) in address. In such situations it is obviously an indication of respect and does not signify a superior/inferior authority relationship.

Margi terminology, in theory, extends infinitely along all lines of relationship. There are, however, two restrictions upon this extension. The first is the practicality of limiting kinsmen to known relations; the second and more important limitation arises from a bias resulting from the fact that Margi reckon their descent patrilineally.

Consanguineal kinsmen are effectively divided into three categories, one's own patrilineally related kinsmen, one's mother's patrilineal kinsmen, and other kinsmen. The latter are recognized and are accorded the appropriate behavior when the occasion arises, but the probabilities are that they will not often be encountered and some will not even be known by

name. It also happens that some individuals, known by name, may bear an unknown kin relationship. Mother's patrilineal kinsmen are far more relevant to youths than adults, for as one grows older his or her mother's patrilineage becomes less and less important. This is more pronounced for a woman when she marries, for at that time her husband's lineage assumes a major importance as her own and particularly that of her mother's diminishes,

The importance of each of the two patrilineages is as much a consequence of the rules of residence as the rules of descent, for it is that portion of a patrilineage living in one's hamlet or the hamlet of one's mother which is of practical importance. Since descent is patrilineal and residence normally patrilocal, a hamlet is normally a collection of agnatically related compound heads. Large or very old hamlets may have two or more traditional patrilineages and perhaps some immigrants, but in such cases kinsmen still constitute a special order of relations within the local setting and are very likely to be clustered into patrilocal neighborhoods. Although lineal ties beyond the hamlet are recognized and acknowledged, they are of little significance.

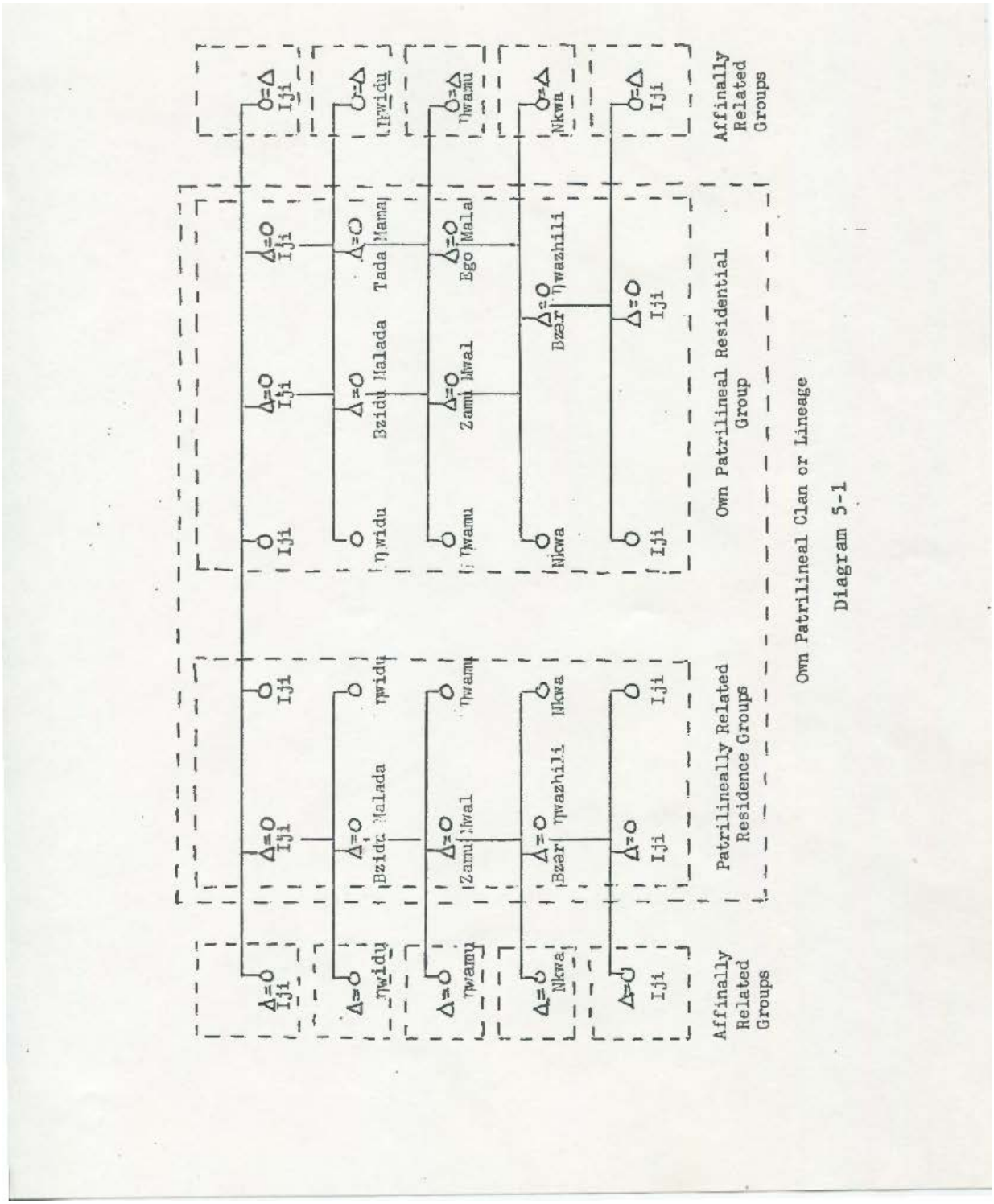
The authority in kinship reflects the general organization of the society in that the household is the basic unit. As we have seen, a man with a dependent family, living in his own compound owes his father respect, deference, assistance and moral support, but much of this is pro forma and a father's authority does not extend over his son's dependents to any significant extent especially as the son grows older. The situation does not pertain to those rare cases wherein a son and his family live in his father's compound or even between a younger brother living with his elder. In these cases the head of the compound has authority over those living with him. Normally, every male Margi wants his independence and will not continue to live with his father or brother any longer than he must.

The combination of descent and residence in a hamlet generates the most significant grouping of kinsmen. Such units may be linked to other patrilineally related hamlets and, through females, to still other hamlets. The intensity and strength of relationships diminishes with such links, particularly through females. This is summarized in Diagram 5-1, which represents a highly idealized situation. It assumes that each hamlet contains all categories of kin relationships, which could be characteristic of only very large hamlets. It also depicts only a single connection with another patrilineally related hamlet and further assumes that connection to be at the most senior generation. Though other possibilities exist, the situation would not differ substantially from that shown.

The diagram assumes the presence of both married and unmarried females in every generation, all married ones living in the hamlet of their husbands while unmarried ones live in their own hamlets. In practice this would be unlikely since older women who have been widowed usually continue to reside in their deceased husband's hamlet as the wife of one of his brothers (levirate) or as a malabjagu. In addition, it is not uncommon to find a divorced woman in her paternal hamlet between marriages, though such a stay is normally no more than a few months. Finally, the genealogical depth in the diagram is unrealistic as it is unlikely that any individual will have both ascending and descending iji. It could happen, however, that he would have classificatory iji of both generations if there were enough age spread in the generations. At both Kirngu and Humbili five generations were present though not in a single continuous line.

The diagram would not be different for an unmarried female. A married woman would not reside in her patrilineal hamlet, of course, but her own children would reside in <u>their</u> patrilineal hamlet. Married women thus have divided loyalties. Their pasts are represented by

Diagram 5-1


Affinally Related Groups
Patrilineally Related Residence Groups
Own Patrilineal Residential Group
Affinally Related Groups
Own Patrilineal Clan or Lineage
Diagram 5-1

the hamlets of their brothers, their present and future in the hamlets of their husbands and sons.

The relationships encompassed in this grouping are the major kinsmen of any individual, but the relations are more than relations between kinsmen, for the added factor of residence makes them "relevant kinsmen." Therefore, a bzidu living in one's own hamlet is far more important than one residing in another--although related--hamlet.

The orientation of this group is perhaps caught in the term "proprietary." These are the kinsmen with whom one shares responsibilities and obligations, the family of legal orientation. The behavior of any member of this group reflects upon all others, and they will, depending upon their access to him, insure that his behavior is proper. In ideal terms, clansmen, wherever they live, should evidence mutual responsibility and disputes should be settled within the group. However, the institutional mechanisms for settling disputes and implementing mutual responsibility are strikingly lacking and, in fact, rarely extend beyond the localized group. As a consequence, today Margi are more apt to speak of their local hamlet as a referent of identity than their clan. This local group does not constitute a lineage, per se, and genealogically close kinsmen may live outside it and not feel the constraints and esprit characterized by that particular hamlet.

There is a general diminution of proprietary interest in cross-sex relationships. Older men recognize that females of the group are eventually going to marry into some other group and perhaps always be away. They, therefore, expect much less of them in their behavior. Women in general do not have the same authority as men in the group, so older women are not able to instruct or admonish their young kinsmen with the same finality. However, it is recognized that women belonging to one's group are more demanding than other women so the general pattern of proprietary concern is maintained.

The kinsmen and their spouses described above are those in daily contact. The proprietary interest constantly surrounding a youth and the rivalry implicit in some of the relationships often bear heavily on young men in particular, but also upon girls as well. It is particularly at this time that one's mother's localized patrilineage assumes its importance (Diagram 5-2). Margi distinguish between maternal and paternal relatives of the same terminology by specifying whether they are on the path (lagu) of mother or on the path of father. Thus iji lagu tada can be distinguished from iji lagu mama. The maternal localized patrilineage is more relevant to ego as a youth. After adulthood, visits to one's maternal hamlet become less frequent as the need for a retreat diminishes and as individuals become concerned with their own families. Because the relationship is so much associated with youths, the diagram does not assume the same generational depth apparent in one's own patrilineage, nor is a related hamlet shown--none of significance being likely.

The general orientation of the maternal hamlet to ego is one of affectionate indulgence; it is an effective balance to one's own hamlet. No one there has a proprietary concern with ego who will be supported and comforted without regard to being right or wrong. On the other hand, it is a support which is more general than specific, more emotional than material, and in the final analysis one is more likely to receive a sympathetic ear than a helping hand.

It may be useful at this point to epitomize the preceding discussion by noting that an individual may have a zamu who is the son of his bzidu, a zamu who is the son of his psigu, and a zamu who is the son of his ngwiamu. Although they are all terminologically of the same relationship to him and although there may be a marked similarity in his superficial behavior toward each of them, they are virtually different relatives. The first is in his own lineage and potentially a person of importance in his life; the second is a member of his mama's lineage and

Diagram D-2

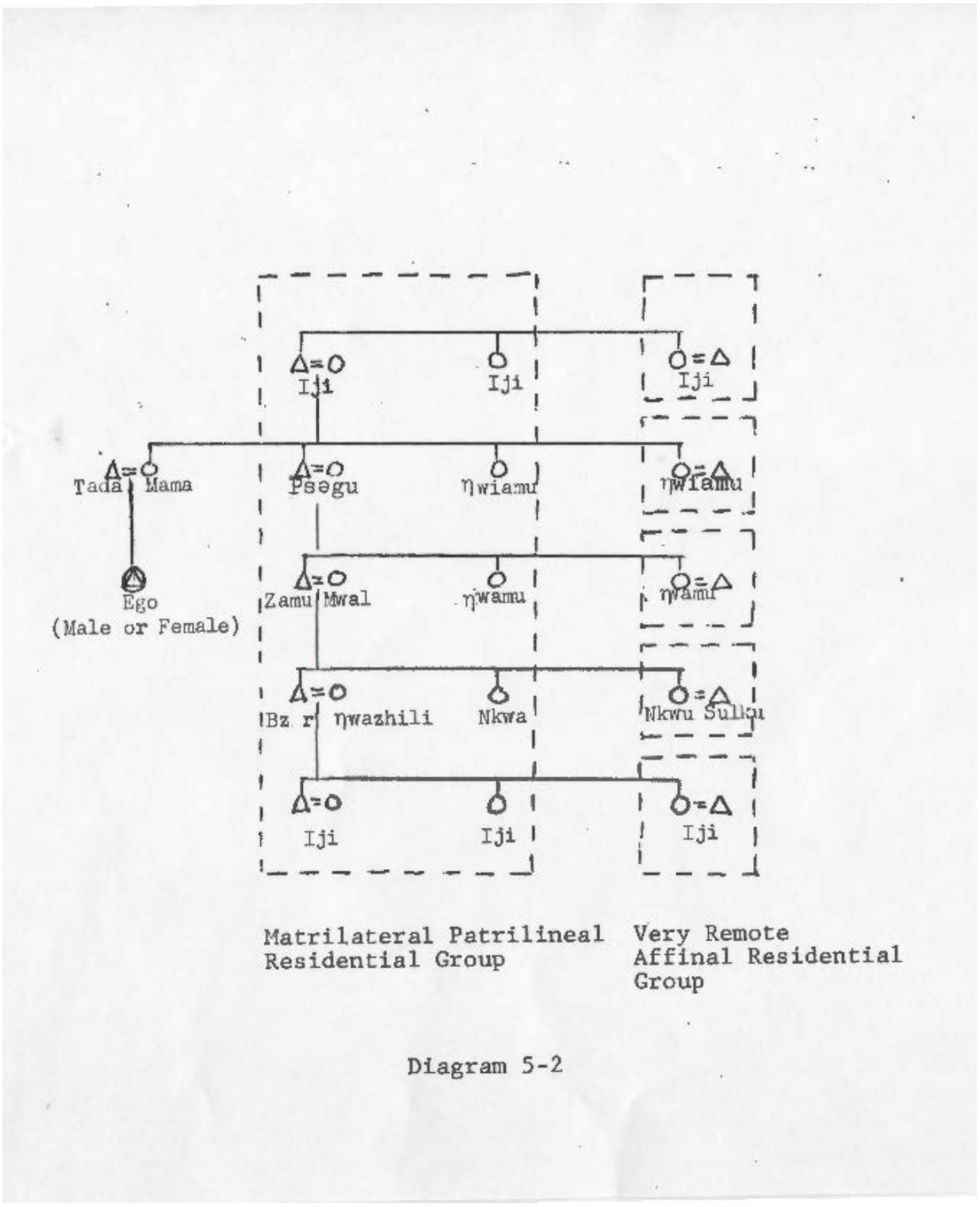


Diagram 5-2

at most a supportive relative; while the third is in a lineage which is affinal to his mama and may be barely known to him. For simplicity, this discussion of localized kin has omitted any reference to hamlets in which there may be members of more than one clan, a circumstance which has long been possible and is increasingly common in recent years as the population has become more mobile. In such instances the relatives between non-kinsmen may be important-perhaps of more practical importance than those between some kinsmen. However, contiguity is not a substitute for kinship and the ties will not be binding in either a jural or moral sense. Furthermore, the ties between such neighbors tend to be idiosyncratic and dependent upon personality and circumstance.

Patrilineages have been discussed as though they were localized. In fact a complete patrilineage is larger than any local grouping and extends to several hamlets and ordinarily to other kingdoms as well. They are, therefore, not localized groupings, although each has a traditional home from which it is said to originate.

These larger patrilineal descent groups, termed fal in Margi, generally correspond to what we call clans. The members of a clan are said to be related to a single founding ancestor whose exploits are usually legendary though not necessarily mythical. Each member assumes a genealogical relation with the founder and he may be able to recite the genealogical links; however, he is unlikely to know his genealogical relationship with a fellow clan member who is not closely related to him. This situation is typical of the lack of interest in precise genealogical ties which is characteristic of Margi. Such genealogies as are known are usually only accurate for the most recent generations; for any earlier times they are depicted as a single line without concern for collateral developments.

There is no structure of authority within any clan which is able to command members. Although there are legends about founders and we have seen that priests (zuli) constituted local hereditary offices, a clan today has only the authority of moral sanctions to compel its members to conform. Over and above this, traditional law sanctions certain universal features of clans such as rules regarding the ownership of land. But if any individual or group decides to leave his clan or to ignore some custom peculiar to it, no one within the clan can prohibit or punish him. The lack of internal structure undoubtedly has exacerbated the tendency of fal to bifurcate. It also has political consequences which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Even though fal lack formal authority, they nonetheless persist, providing every individual with a body of concerned kinsmen. Members of a fal have a responsibility for each other which is unlike their relations with any other persons, though this diminishes when they lack a common residence. For example, they must settle their conflicts amicably since such disputes are not within the jurisdiction of the courts. It is unquestionably significant that the word fal also means praise. There is something supportive, yet intangible, in praise just as there is in the clan.

To discuss the topic of clan authority it is necessary to distinguish between compliance by custom and compliance by sanction. The former is implicit in clans as in all institutions. The very existence of institutions and institutional behavior is indicative of norms which, as learned patterns, regularize behavior; this is the authority in custom. Formal authority by application of sanctions is a far more structured and conscious attribute. It refers to the socially approved ability to command behavior and resources--immaterial as well as material. Although there is no one within a Margi clan who possesses the authority to control directly a member's behavior, denial of clan resources might afford an indirect means of commanding behavior.

The resources of a clan are its name, status, its distinctive customs, its burial ground, and its farm lands. Although a clan's name, its customs, and burial grounds are clearly its property, the clan controls their use only by excluding non-clan members. They constitute rights and not privileges of clan membership. It is not possible to influence someone's behavior by threatening him with denial of these clan attributes because they are inalienable. Land resources would be a more fruitful source of control over clan members. However, a number of structural and cultural factors conspire to make such control more hypothetical than real.

There is first the availability of land which is not yet in scarce supply. Therefore, even if it would be possible to withhold or repossess clan lands, such an act--in the fact of the abundance of alternative lands--would be at most a symbolic act. In this regard it must be noted that Margi values are such that a denial which was of only symbolic value might humiliate the instigator as much as the transgressor. Secondly, there are the land tenure customs themselves which will be discussed in Chapter 7 which effectively invest rights to land to individual families; every man when he establishes his own household receives from his father, or claims from the bush, sufficient land for his needs. There are virtually no sanctions or precedents for revoking such stakes. As we saw in the illustration of the evolution of the family of Shafa in Chapter 4, there is a lack of authoritative familial interdependence among Margi. No family ordinarily has anything which is truly needed by another. The anticipation of inheritance--principally arable land--may hold the families of brothers together in the middle period of their lives, but following the disposition of the patrimony this tie is absent.

Although the population of a clan is not localized, each has a legendary home and perhaps intermediate "homes" which were stopping points in its migration. History

notwithstanding, the functioning clan is to be understood in terms of the final entity or the descendants of the last migration. If there have been units which split off at one or more of the earlier homes, they, for practical purposes, constitute distinct clans. In many cases the names of the clan will change with the bifurcation (see page 56). As a consequence of migration and bifurcation, the founding ancestor is a relative status since he is often only the founder for a regional branch. Earlier "founders" may be known but only so far as they are lineally related to the unit in question, and probably only the "original" founder will be known by most members.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, the Gidem clan of Gulagu is but one of at least three major divisions of a larger patrilineal grouping. The core unit is at Sukur, still called Gidem, although its members speak a language not understood by the Gidem of Gulagu who constitute the next oldest unit. The third is at Dluku, having split off from Gulagu, and is still not differentiated enough to be outside the Gulagu cultural tradition. It is critical to realize, however, that these are three separate structures; there is no interdependence. The ties are historical curiosities, unknown by some and unimportant to all.

All clans have migration legends and most of them have specific references to splits. The reasons are numerous; famines, arguments between family heads, magical events, expulsion, and the like. It is significant, however, that there is no tradition of sections reuniting or even continuing to relate organizationally to the parent stock, for clans are functionally and structurally autonomous. Genealogical connections between them are generally unknown, though in a few instances ethnohistorical research can demonstrate connections between two or more clans. However, most members view such revelations with indifference or skepticism.

The autonomy of clans--they do not act in concert-makes forgotten genealogical connections understandable; they are unconcerned about connections because such

relationships are of no importance. Their lack of concern with genealogical ties within clans is perhaps more surprising and requires comment. Except for very small clans, it is the name of the clan which binds its members rather than their genealogical relationships. To a great extent such relationships are unknown;this is not merely a matter of the remoteness of the connections for it seems to characterize relations which are within a depth of only three or four generations.

In the hamlet of Humbili there were approximately thirty-six household heads who were members of the Gidum clan (mas. Medugu; fem. Kwadu). My attempt to determine their genealogical connections revealed eleven subgroups, some of which had common ancestors but none of which recognized specific collateral relations beyond knowing that they were all Gidem and specifically or vaguely descendants of Ptil Zhigam "who was a ptil long ago" (Diagram 5-3). After many hours of re-interviewing, cross-checking, and correlation, the broader genealogical system emerged, one which related them all with a reasonable assurance of accuracy (Diagram 5-4).[1]

The individuals who viewed this synthesis universally regarded it with great interest, and many for the first time discovered their genealogical connections with their neighbors. For many months I believed that my synthesis was a contribution to Margi ethnography--that I had been able to reveal the true unity in the Gidft of Humbili. It was only with the realization that the synthesis made no difference in their lives and that an understanding of their clan structure

[1] The numbers in the diagrams are residence codes of mdurkyi at Humbili. Names are included only to show ties between divisions and errors or inconsistencies. It should be noted that only two divisions could correctly name ancestors back to Ptal Zhig9m, six had correct genealogies but stopped short of Zhigam, and three were erroneous. In the latter respect, "A" had the most blatant errors (but the greatest genealogical depth) in that Kwajihu was Amtinawa's brother--not his son--and Bulama was Kwajihu's son--not his father's father.

Diagram 5-3

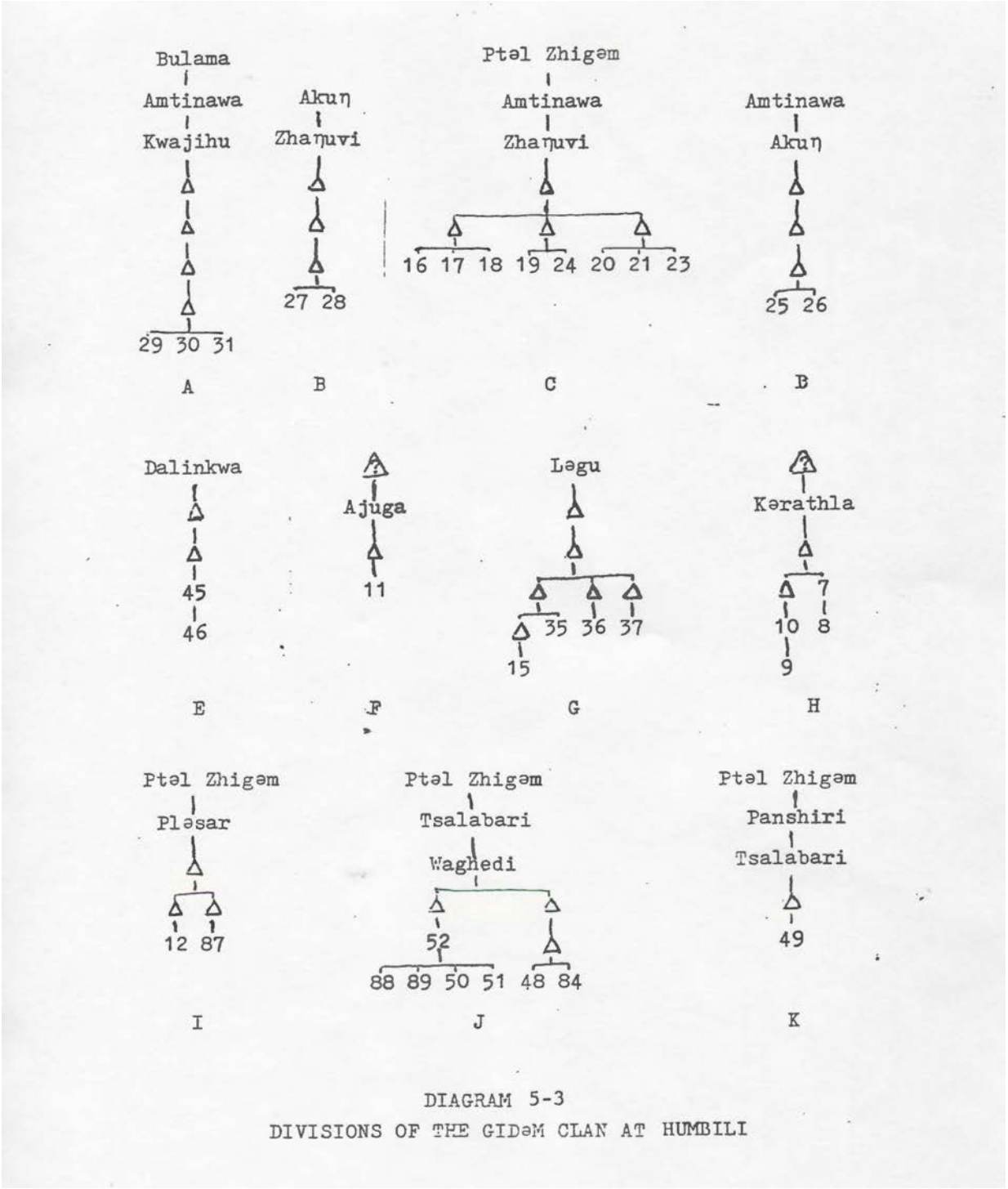


DIAGRAM 5-3
DIVISIONS OF THE GIDəM CLAN AT HUMBILI

was not enhanced that I came to accept Diagram 5-3 as more accurate and revealing of Margi clans.[2]

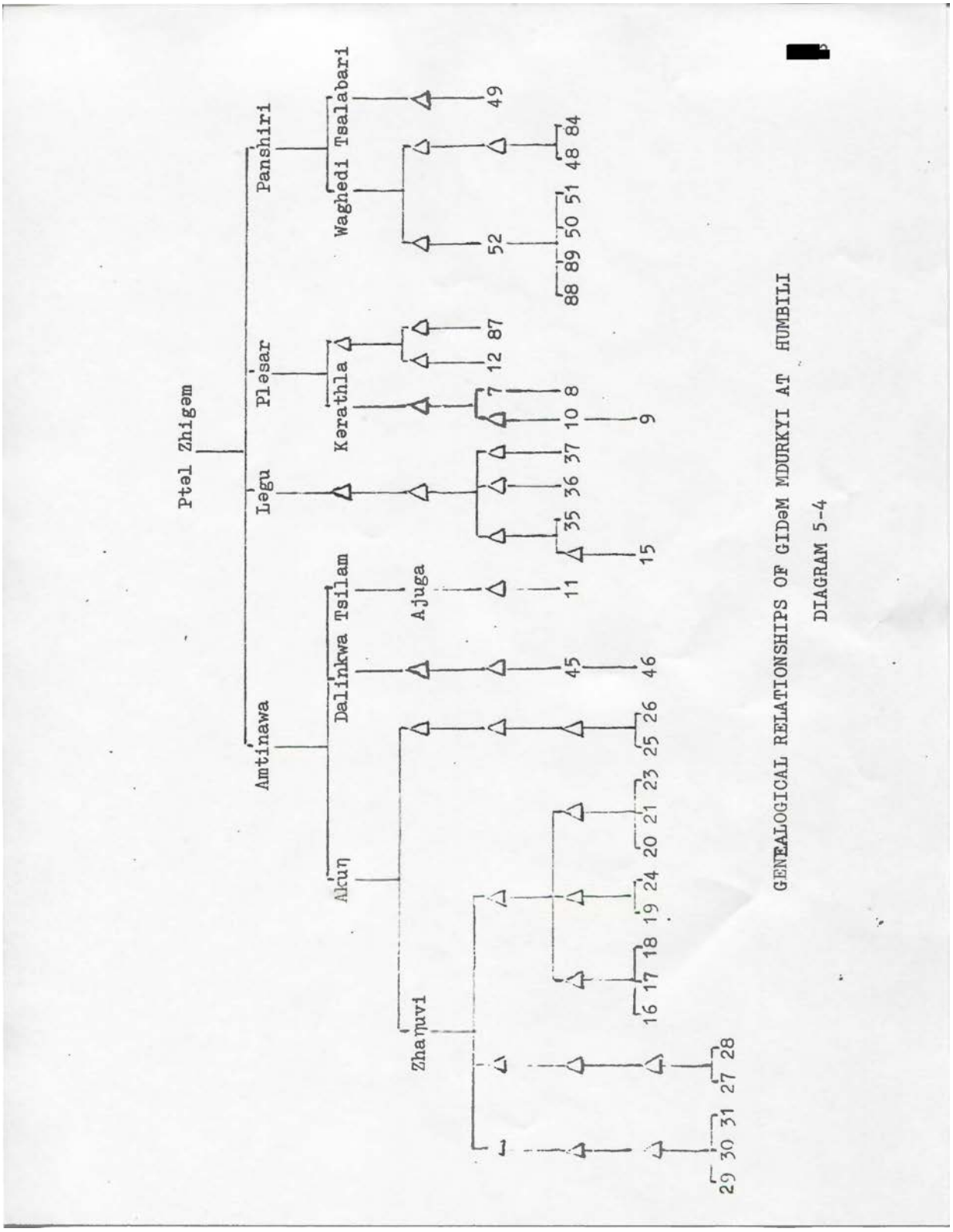
It seems apparent that there is little or no need for detailed knowledge in their descent systems. Membership is based more upon sentiment than upon demonstrable genealogical ties. In this they reveal their lack of concern with means; it is the clan qua clan which is important, not its details. Yet in the context of their history, the frangible quality of their clans is also revealed; for if they do not trace connections between collateral kinsmen as closely related as these, it is not surprising that even minor migrations result in permanent splits.

This tendency is fundamental in understanding Margi social structure and it should not be confused or even likened to the process which Evans-Pritchard and a host of other Africanists have called segmentary structure. Without attempting to describe that type of organization, it can be merely noted that a fundamental part of it is that there is fission of kinship units which in other circumstances reunite to achieve common purposes; fission is followed by fusion. Margi only incorporate the fissionary process; they in fact come much closer to the Durkheimian notion of segmental structure rather than the later concept of segmentary structure.

Fal usually have both masculine and feminine names and a very few have generic names with masculine and feminine sub-names. Feminine names frequently begin with the sounds nkwa-, its contraction kwa-, or ngwa-. Though the language technically lacks gender, these prefixes are associated with females, as in nkwa = daughter and ngwamu = sister (see also Hoffmann 1963: 66). The normal association of masculine and feminine names would, one might assume, result in such pairs as Zhau/Ngwazhau or Waba/Ngwaba. However, this type of

[2] Among the twelve household heads who were members of the Ghwa clan (fem. Kwadlu), I was never able to relate them in fewer than five apparently distinct lines. My ultimate success with the Gidem was unquestionably due to the fact that it was the royal clan and individuals were better able to trace their ancestry to even a remote ptal.

Diagram 5-4


Ptal Zhigəm
Amtinawa
Legu
Plesar
Panshiri
Dalinkwa Tsilam
Akuŋ
Ajuga
Kərathla
Waghedi Tsalabari
Zhaŋuvi
GENEALOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS OF GIDəM MDURKYI AT HUMBILI
DIAGRAM 5-4

association is extremely rare. Margi are not cognizant of the feminine prefixes and one finds many apparently unrelated names such as Gidum/Kwadu, Ishidi/Ngwabu, or Birdling/Kwakyu. In addition there are some perverse combinations such as Ghwa/Kwadlu and Ithlali/Ngwaghwa, in which the apparent feminine form of the former appears with the latter, or Ghwasha/Kwaya but also Zuli/Kwaya, in which the same feminine name appears with two different clans yet is the "feminine" construction of neither. There are a few clans which have masculine names which begin with feminine prefixes, but in almost every case of this type the feminine name of the clan is the same as the masculine, as in Kwazhi/ Kwazhi, Kwamdu/Kwamdu, and Kwadla/Kwadla.

It seems probable that these anomalies are consequences of the absence of conscious gender in the language and the frangible nature of Margi fal. For example, the royal clan at Mazhinyi was called Icogwa/Ngwarlula which, as we have noted, was dispersed in the 17th century; today one finds among the Margi Babal a clan known as Mazhinyi/Cogwa and among the Margi Titum one called Cogwa/Cogwa. In the first instance the place of origin has become the masculine name while the former masculine name, contracted, has become the feminine one; in the second case the contracted masculine name is used by both males and females. The fal are distinct, though in these instances the fame of the early kingdom at Mazhinyi is known by them. It should also be noted that a surprising number of men need to think a few moments to recall the feminine names of their own clans, and they often do not know the masculine names of their wives' clans. Women, however, rarely suffer such deficiencies since the masculine names of most clans are considered the generic names. In 1981 several young people from Kirngu did not know that there was a generic name, Gidum, for their own clan, thinking the name was simply Medugu/Kwadu.

The impermanence of names is a manifestation of the lack of a structural continuity of clans as they migrate and split into sections. The tendency toward proliferation of clans and the general confusion about just when a new branch formed makes it virtually impossible to talk about a precise number of Margi clans. There are, however, in every kingdom clans recognized as having their homes there; they constitute the traditional fal of that ptilkur. Of course, there are many more clans represented by the odd family who has migrated on its own from some other area. Table 5-1 presents the traditional clans of Gulagu, their origins, and traditional homes within the kingdom.

> Despite fragmentation, it is from the clan that a Margi receives his sense of continuity with the past. As we noted (p. 60), history is--for all practical purposes--the history of one's clan with emphasis upon its history in the relevant section. One clan history may touch on another but only incidentally: "We came here when Zhigum was ptil," or "Zuli (the clan) were our hunters in the old days." While the clan history constitutes a link with the past which Margi think important to know, they do not follow collateral developments which result when the clan bifurcates. Differences between clans--apart from historical developments--can be divided into two types: general differences which are constant and special differences which are manifest only at certain times among some individuals. General differences include variations in dietary restrictions and beliefs, while specific differences include such things as rituals unique to a given clan and certain ways of performing rituals.
>
> There is apparently a close association between general differences and geographical origins. Clans with similar histories are far more likely to be distinguished only by specific differences. It is only when a clan subsequently migrates to a new area that it manifests

Table 5-1

Traditional Clans of Gulagu

Masculine Name	Feminine Name	Place of Origin with intermediate stops	Home Hamlet
Bərdliŋ	Kwakyu	Mcakili (Gudur), Wula, Dluku, Wanu	Makwan
Ghwa	Kwadlu	Mcakili, Mildiŋ	Dagu-dispersed
Ghwasha	Kwaya	Mcakili, Kopei, (Kamale)	Wanu
Ghəmdia	Zadu	Mcakili, Sukur, Maiva	Wanu
Medugu (Generic: Gidəm)	Kwadu	Mcakili, Sukur	Kərŋu
Ishidi	Ngwabu	Mandara, Pabur, Madikangkang, Mazhinyi	Tra-but very dispersed
Kwamdu[2a]	Kwamdu	Fitu, Sukur	Humbili
Kwamdu	Dəmsa	Fitu, Wano	
Kwazhi	Kwazhi	Mcakali, Mildiŋ	Kərŋu (original settlement)
Madla	Madla	Kirawa, Zugwalgwa	Makwan (subsequently Gwaram)
Wala	Gadla	Mcakili, Mabas, Wula	Wanu
Zuli	Kwaya	Thləkufu, Mazhinyi	Mazhinyi Giwa

TABLE 5-1.

[2a] əŋkyagu. See p. 74 n.

general differences from the clans traditional to that area. For example, the clans of Margi Dzirngu differ from those of Margi Babal in that the Dzirngu consider the eating of reptiles,particularly snakes, a repulsive custom followed only by the ngkyagu caste, but among Margi Babal the prestigious Gadzama clan consider it perfectly acceptable. Yet Margi

Dzirngu consider the Gadzama to be normal Margi and never compare them to ngkyagu. Probably few, if any, know of the dietary similarities between the two because virtually no Gadzama live among them. Similarly, Gadzama and possibly some other Babal clans believe each man has an animal "familiar" which is individually related to him, sharing his fate, born when he was born and dying when he dies.[3] This belief is not characteristic of the Dzirngu and most had never heard of it, and hearing of it, regarded it with incredulity. These differences seem to relate primarily to the respective geographic centers of the clans.

Specific differences between clans are literally too numerous to do more than sample. It is said that every clan has some distinctive custom and it may well be so, although some of the so-called distinctive traits are in fact characteristic of other more distant clans. Specific differences are most notable in the celebration of life crises, in that each clan has its own rites of passage. Some have rites which others do not observe at all, as for example the boy's initiation (dukwa) of the Gidum (Vaughan 1962) and Birdling, but most clans have similar rites which differ only in their execution. In marriage the customs are usually those of the groom's clan although the bride will dress according to her clan's tradition. The customs surrounding death are clan specific in two senses: first, the funeral ceremony varies from clan to clan, and second, one of the most universally recognized distinctions of clan is that each has one or more traditional burial grounds. It is important to be buried in one of these places, although it is obviously sometimes impossible. The graves of the clan are a visible manifestation of its historical depth and they are more important in this sense than for any religious reasons. The clan cemetery is not thought to be sacred and does not invoke any particularly subdued-or

[3] It is regrettable that no more information about these beliefs is available. My informant was a single Gadzama living among the Dzirngu who had been converted to Christianity as a child and had only secondary information on the topic. Meek (1931:I, 224) refers to the belief as a general characteristic of the Margi.

reverential behavior. It is an area specifically related to a clan and inalienable from it. A women will, in all probability, be buried in the cemetery of the husband with whom she is residing at the time of her death. If she has become malabjagu, she will be buried in the cemetery of her last husband or of whomever she is a dependent.

Ironically, after a man's death his formal authority over his sons emerges. They are bound in their ritual obligations toward their deceased tada. The eldest surviving son is charged with the responsibility of keeping a shrine for his tada and of making an annual sacrifice in his honor. At this time the other sons should return to their elder brother's compound and join him in the ceremony, which is, however, very brief and simple. Unmarried daughters may participate, but it is not unusual to see women assisting their husbands.

The topic of reverence for ancestors brings up another "resource" over which clans in some African societies traditionally exercise control and which may be a source of clan authority. In a society in which religion is substantially concerned with ancestors who constitute a pantheon of supernatural forces capable and willing to exercise control over the affairs of men--in such societies the clan has power over its members. Given the segmental tendencies of Margi clans, it should not be surprising that their form of ancestor worship is lacking in such an inclusive philosophy. Instead we find that although Margi acknowledge the power of ancestors in general, they do not conceive of a lineal pantheon. Their conception of ancestors not only replicates their view of kinship, it is terminologically similar. They perceive two categories of deceased: ancestors (in general), iji, the same word for members of the third ascending generation, and my ancestor (my genitor), tada. The shrine, the kaptu tada, is only for the latter. In brief Margi actively pay homage to only their most immediate ancestor, all others are merely afforded a general reverence. The attitude of the living is much like that

which they held toward their tada in life. A deceased tada may be of assistance, but men speak more about the harm he might do should they offend him. Women, too, are expected to participate in the kaptu tada ritual but as in most other religious matters their roles are minor and nonessential. (There is also a kaptu mama tended by her youngest surviving son, but it is almost trivial and very frequently neglected.)

The custom of worshipping only the most recently deceased ancestor inevitably causes the family to segment into collateral groups dedicated to different ancestors. This, of course, confirms the segmentation based upon familial autonomy discussed in the illustration of the split in Shafa's family (pp. 80-83). There were 14 kaptu tada in Kirngu in 1960 among the lineal descendants of Ptil Wampana who died in 1910, with Wampana's shrine being tended by an aged (88) and destitute son. Obviously the principles of ancestor worship are anything but unifying for Margi, and if the practice were more important and more frequent, it might even be a divisive factor in the clan.

Finally, a function frequently attributed to clans which must be considered is the regulation of marriage. Marriage prohibitions are often phrased in both local and kin terms because one's neighbors are so frequently one's kinsmen. There is only one rule regarding marriage within the hamlet per se and that is an injunction against taking the current wife of a neighbor, be he kinsman or not. Otherwise, the apparent local exogamy observed by Meek (1931, I:229) is a consequence of prohibitions against marrying kinswoman. As we have seen (p. 84), the tada of a girl desires that her husband come from the local area. A sulku (son-in-law) conveniently near is a ready source of support. This is more pronounced for first marriages when the engagement period and the coincident period of brideservice is prolonged. This is not

the case for marriage to a divorced woman nor when the husband is older with other wives, even though his new wife be a mala mba, a virgin bride,

The prohibitions regarding marriage to a kinswoman are precisely conceived, but in practice their application is quite variable. The first rule is that no one may marry an individual more closely related than third cousin on either side of his or her family. This is so formally understood that individuals have diagrammed it for me. Yet on one occasion when two young men who were second cousins had just explained this rule, they were confused when I pointed out that their own children should then be able to marry. Their shock and puzzlement revealed that the rule needs interpretation. The problem arises in that Margi do not have a concept of cousin, and as we have seen, they use sibling terminology extensively. The two young men called each other by sibling terminology and because they live in close proximity think of each other as close kinsmen. A more realistic interpretation of their rule is to reckon permissible marriage not by degree of biological relation so much as degree of "felt" relationship. Thus the rule might translate that only kinsmen more than two generations removed from common residence (same hamlet) may marry.

It should be realized that this will inevitably make the application of the rule skewed with respect to patrilineal and matrilateral kinsmen, for the former will tend to continue to share a common village while the latter rarely do. This is borne out in practice. Individuals rarely can name matrilateral second cousins, particularly if they are related through two female links. In this fashion it develops that the rule, of exogamy is more rigidly applied on the patrilineal side--even though it is formally a symmetrical rule.

Given the rule's limited jurisdiction/application, marriage to women belonging to one's own patrilineal descent group is not uncommon. Marriage within one's own fal is obviously a

function of the genealogical depth of the group; in large clans – such as Gidem – we may find that men marry women from their own clan. In Kirngu, which is entirely made up of men of Gidem and which was a very conservative hamlet, approximately 30% of the wives in 1960 were Kwadu, the feminine name of Gidem, though all were remote kinswoman. Smaller clans such as Madla are exogamous not because of clan exogamy, per se, but because no couple is remotely enough related for marriage to be possible. Birdling a growing clan, had just gotten to the point in 1960 that intra-clan marriage was possible although it was shocking to the older members of the clan. It may be concluded that marriage prohibitions are a matter of degrees of closeness reckoned both genealogically and socially.

There are two marriage rules concerning marriage to divorced women. One, we have noted, enjoins a man from marrying the wife of a man from his hamlet, though one may marry a former wife of a neighbor. The second rule is similar in that there is a prohibition against marrying the wife of a patrilineal kinsman. Like the first rule, if she has had an intervening husband, there should be no difficulty-though in both cases, if there is still animosity or particularly if there are unsettled details of the divorce, opinion would be strongly against the marriage. There is at least one court case of an annulment based in part on the fact that the woman's immediately previous husband was her new husband's clansman even though very remotely related. This case was instituted by the former husband because he wanted her to return. Popular opinion agreed to the legitimacy of his claim --as well as the foolishness of his act.

It has often been observed that when men live in relatively small societies, rules of exogamy facilitate the extension of social ties and thereby may provide a broader basis for survival and security. Even though Margi may marry--in some cases--within the clan, they do

seem to draw their wives from a wide area. The eighty-four wives in Kirngu in 1959 came from at least twenty-five different fal, while the husbands came from but one (plus two married mafa). (Ptil Yarkur's seven wives were from five different clans.) Although in this way Margi establish ties with other fal, it is more difficult to show conclusively that these ties strengthen the local groups or the society in general. The most overt indication comes from the obligations a fiancé and young husband owes his wife's kinsmen. But these obligatory work groups and small gifts cannot be considered to figure prominently in the economy. If there is any substantial advantage under present conditions to the tendency to practice de facto clan exogamy, it arises from the simple extension of social relationships which make travel and communication easier, and to the extent that this promotes social solidarity then the ends of a stable community are served.

The prohibitions of marriage with the wife of a neighbor or patrilineal kinsmen can be more convincingly related to the desire for social solidarity. Elopement and stealing of wives are very common Margi practices, yet they invariably leave feelings of animosity if only as a consequence of wounded pride. To allow these divisive acts to persist within a fal which must honor traditional ties of cooperation and respect or within a giwa whose members are in daily contact would invite intolerable social disorganization.

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The clan is not the only kinship grouping recognized by Margi; there is a bilateral grouping called jil. The term is loosely used to mean relative though technically it is not used to include close kinsmen. But once again it is not the precise degree of relationship which

determines jil. It is more a matter of perceived remoteness rather than genealogical connection, and, predictably, perception of closeness is influenced by the principles of patrilineality. Persons related through males are recognized as being more closely related than those with one or more female links.

In practice this means that patrilineal kinsmen might not be reckoned as jil until they were as distant as third or fourth cousins (and this modified by residential closeness), while within the patrilineage of mama the extension would probably start as close as second cousins or those first cousins who are Ngwidu's children, Links through two or more females might not even be remembered as kinsmen at all. The principle of patrilineality skews the presumed bilateral grouping; consequently, a jil is probably best understood as a kindred of putatively distant relatives.

Like all kindreds a jil is without structural permanence. Many of its members have nothing more in common than their mutual relationship with the individual link. Furthermore any individual is likely to be a member of a number of jil. The jil is thought of as a supporting group and this is conspicuously the case when an individual is involved in a public ceremony. At the farmbwa form of marriage ceremony the families of the bride and groom are expected to make lavish displays of wealth which can only be achieved through the help of their jil. Similarly at funerals, the deceased's jil will attend and swell the crowd doing all they can to celebrate the occasion appropriately. One of the largest and most festive events for Margi is the ful bili or celebration after the birth of twins,[4] an event which occurs with marked frequency. The essence of this ceremony is feasting and dancing to welcome the twins and assure them that they have joined an important and prosperous family (twins being easily offended and

[4] References to "twins" which occur throughout are in fact to multiple births; triplets are also called bili.

potentially dangerous), On this occasion the jil of both the mother and father converge to make it a lavish holiday.

Obviously at such times the support one receives is variable. There is no way of requiring participation and more distant jil members will feel less inclined to join in the celebration. However, it is a recognized phenomenon of Margi society that the support one gets is directly proportional to the support one lends or one's family lends. Consequently, in practice the jil emerges as a kin grouping the size and functions of which are largely determined by reciprocal relations of support.

One aspect of the Margi concept of support must be mentioned; to them support inevitably means willingness to fight. It is characteristic of these aggressive mountaineers to phrase their attachments and social relationships in terms of fighting. To a Margi male a member of his jil should come to his assistance in conflict, "they are the ones who will fight for you." But fighting is so ubiquitous that they recognize that one might conceivably get into a fight with one's kinsmen. Therefore, they distinguish between two types of jil: jil dizu (dizu =- red, a reference to blood) who are too closely related to fight among themselves and jil, pidamagara (pidamagara - where have you slept? a reference to its remoteness) among whom fighting might occur. Presumably even one's jil pidamagara might come to your aid in a fight with a totally unrelated person. There is no finely determined genealogical line between these two types of jil, although at either extreme it is clear who is too closely related for fighting to be permitted and who is so distantly related that it would be possible. The actual dividing line is, in fact, determined by the act of fighting, that is, if they fight then they are jil pidamagara and it is clearly understood that this may be variable. Behavior determines the category rather than the reverse.

A final concept should be mentioned with regard to kinship. It is the Margi use of the term "wulfu." It is used in discussions of kinship to supplement information about one's relationships. The term usually is used to mean "seed" and in discussion of kinship its use is somewhat analogous to the archaic usage to mean "offspring," as in "Abraham's seed." To ask a Margi what his wulfu is inquires after the more specific origins of his branch of his clan. For example, when a clan has several traditional locations or when it is currently widely dispersed, to ask for the wulfu will elicit the particular home from which his branch comes. *I*shidi is a case in point; it is much dispersed and one may find that its wulfu may be Mazhinyi, Midlu, Tra, etc., depending upon who is being questioned. This is, however, not a formal category of kinship and is not always used consistently. Often when one asks a man for the wulfu of his wife, he will give the masculine name of her clan. It is also a relative concept which may be used to mean "tribe" or "race" depending upon the context.

Throughout this chapter the ambiguous authority structure in Margi kin groupings beyond the nuclear family has been emphasized, largely because this is in such contrast with other African societies. But it would be incorrect to think that fal are unimportant in the lives of traditional Margi. A fal provides each Margi with a history, a group of proprietary kinsmen, individuals for whom and to whom he is responsible, and an identity beyond his own accomplishments. One's fal is an extension of one's self and one finds security in its numbers, its resources, and its reputation. One conforms to the norms of one's clan not because they are enforceable but because they are the criteria of identity.

Fal is a significant category in the organization of the world to traditional Margi, but it is one whose importance was greater in the past than it is likely to be in the future. Identities based upon membership in alternative, equally comprehensive groups seem probable in the

future. This may have happened in the past with the emergence of kingdoms and may account for the relatively weak structure of fals in 1960. At that time one could also anticipate/forsee that Christianity and Islam might soon offer competing identities to further erode clan authority.

Clans seem vulnerable to two challenges which can be anticipated. Land scarcity is likely to force individuals to seek rights-in-land in opposition to existing fal procedures. Secondly, as population increases and disperses in quest for land, ties among clansmen may become so obscure that disputes which are now regarded as matters private to the fal will become appropriate matters for public adjudication. At that point the notion of fal as a community of kinsmen will become moot.

Chapter 6

Social Differentiation

(Ntikiya, division)

In traditional Margi society there is little significant difference in life style attributable to wealth. There is, however, differential wealth, a portion of which is heritable. The most easily measured and recognized indices of wealth are the amount of land in cultivation and a closely related variable--number of wives and cattle. Although land may be inherited, it is not land per se which is recognized as wealth but land in cultivation. Goods and money may be inherited and these may be instrumental in acquiring wives, but the total accumulation of most men is meager and it is likely that it must be spread among more than one heir today, although in the past primogeniture gave the eldest son an advantage. Individual prestige is the most conspicuous and important consequence of wealth, and for all practical purposes this, too, cannot be bequeathed.

Cattle which are heritable and can be converted to cash could be an index of class; but until very recently very few Margi owned cattle, and these were entrusted to Fulani for keeping so that they were virtually an invisible factor. They served as repositories of wealth which could be converted to cash in emergencies. Beginning in the mid-1960's cattle ownership increased and Margi began tending their own cattle, several kinsmen coming together with their meager holdings and forming cooperative herds. This was probably due to the economic boom indirectly caused by the Nigerian Civil War, and cattle became a way of investing one's wealth. Withal, the number of owners and the average holdings were too small to make a significant difference in life style by 1973-74. In a typical hamlet, such as Humbili, less than 20% of the mdurkyi owned any cattle and of these about 80% owned less than four head. However, the desire to own cattle is growing. With bridewealth having become so high in the post-war years, cattle are about the only immediate source of wealth sufficient for getting a wife. It seems very likely that in the immediate future there will be a very high correlation between polygyny and cattle ownership.

There is a gross correlation between wealth and the political division of society, in that those living in the royal hamlet are more likely to be prosperous than others. But this is a tendency only, for the range of wealth is no different from that found in other hamlets of comparable size. Furthermore, members of the royal clan living in other hamlets are no different from those of commoner (talaka) classes. The higher probability of the royalty from Kirngu being wealthier than commoners reflects their advantage in attracting wives, who, it is said, prefer the prestige of being married to a member of the royal hamlet. This is borne out in the polygyny rates of Kirngu compared to Humbili (Table 4-1), despite the fact that Humbili is largely inhabited by distant members of the royal clan. In fact, it should be added that the incidence of polygyny at Humbili is higher for commoners than for members of the royal clan there.

Political power and wealth among Margi are acquired by entirely different principles. Wealth is at heart a matter of individual achievement. Even when one inherits a measure of wealth, he can never inherit enough to ensure that he will live out his life as a wealthy and prestigious man. One must work and strive to achieve and maintain a position of wealth in the society. On the other hand, most political power is based in an ascriptive system which determines that only certain persons shall be eligible for political power. To be sure, power is never fully ascribed and individual capacity and drive are essential, but these are applicable only after the ascriptive criteria have been met. The most able and apt leader will never achieve power in the traditional system unless he meets the ascriptive requirements, mainly clan, seniority, and sex. A wealthy man will have a measure of influence over his neighbors and possibly members of his clan provided that he uses his wealth in such a way as to secure their support, but there is no way that he can translate this into formal authority. A man who has an office, however, can

command respect and allegiance by virtue of his office even though he may be of modest means. Among traditional Margi power is likely to lead to wealth far more significantly than wealth can ever lead to power.

It must be conceded that prestige associated with royalty who lived at Kirngu permitted some of them, particularly young boys, to act imperiously toward talaka. This was restricted to such a small segment of the population that, in and of itself, it is insufficient to indicate classes. However, as we shall see, it had its effect in a later period.

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Having thus indicated the indistinctness of economic class, we must examine two other divisions (ntikiya) which are socially distinct, the mafa (Vaughan 1977)[1] and the ngkyagu (Vaughan 1970, 1973). They do not constitute a continuum of stratification, for each is based upon a different principle of social differentiation. Limited independence, less self-esteem, and reduced economic circumstances are the usual characteristics of mafa. They are Margi of immutable and inferior status. The ngkyagu category, on the other hand, is based upon an even more fundamental division of society, a division which has been institutionalized to the extent that there is a strong ideological dimension to it. An ngkyagu is a different kind of person, one who is thought to have different customs, appetites, and ideas.

In considering the institution which the Margi know as mafakur, we must address briefly its popular conception, that is, the term is traditionally translated "slavery," and it was outlawed long ago by the British administration. The institution bears fundamental resemblance to slavery,

[1] The description of mafakur herein follows very closely this citation. Although this is not an exact reproduction, it Ls presented here with the permission of the editors, Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff.

it cannot be denied, but I believe that in the description which follows the reader will see that there are fundamental differences between the Margi institution and what is known as slavery in the western world.

It is not my desire to gloss over the institution or to romanticize it. The materials herein come from living individuals, the descriptions are as accurate as I can make them. That the institution seems more benign and the individuals more accepting than we feel should be the case, may be more comment about ourselves than the Margi. But let me not go farther than I wish; times had changed by the mid-twentieth century and it is possible that the institution had become more benign--though that is an assumption without evidence--and in at least one instance (to be related below) one individual spoke out against his status.

In 1959-60 the open presence of mafakur was such that I assumed that either the locals did not know of its being outlawed or that it was not considered slavery by the administration. No one was secretive about it; the mafa I knew accepted their status without complaint or objection (with the exception noted). This was in contrast to mutukur (witchcraft), for example, which was known to be illegal.

There are no legends regarding the origins of mafakur; it is assumed to be one of the basic organizing principles of society. Although there is a society known as the Mafa who live to the east, there are no legendary connections between them and the Margi status. However, the absence of a legend of the origin or introduction of the institution is not surprising, for Margi have very few etiological tales.

It is said that during "the old times" there were two prominent methods of recruitment to mafakur: by capture in warfare and as punishment for crime. The former is not known to have been used since about 1872 after which time Margi were so often on the defensive in their

continuing war with the Fulani that traditional inter-village raiding seems to have almost disappeared. As for the use of mafakur as punishment, no specific incident could be verified although it is often cited as a possible punishment for certain offenses. A third method of recruitment is known to have existed although it is less frequently mentioned, that is, cases in which individuals were bartered into mafakur.

The most common reason for warfare is said to have been the desire for mafa. Men, women, and children were taken in war and became the mafa of their captors, although adjustments followed. Some might be ransomed back to their families, while others might escape and return to their homes. Further, it is unlikely that a warrior would be able to bring back more than one mafa, and it is conceivable that warriors would find it impractical and inconvenient to keep mafa in which case they might be traded to wealthy men of the kingdom or given to the ptil as an act of goodwill. The standard of exchange for a mafa was a wrist dagger called a jangum,[2] although more practical exchanges were also made. It is said that mafa who accepted their status were better treated and more valuable than those who were made mafa as punishment.

The principal captives were women; not only because they were easier to capture than men but because they were more desired. They were more likely to accept their new position, it being little different from that of a wife acquired without benefit of bridewealth. Typically, their relations became so normal that they could return to their homes for visits. The loss of potential or actual bridewealth is important, but families expect their daughters to move away, patrilocality being the customary rule of marital residence, and husbands are accustomed to fragile marriages.

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[2] For photographs and further discussion of this knife, see Vaughan, 1973.

All wives enjoy the status of their husbands, and so it is for mafa wives. They would enjoy the status of their captors or owners who are very likely to be persons of wealth and prestige. Furthermore, women who are mafa enjoy no noticeable loss of prestige or desirability because of that status. Two much admired women I knew were mafa who had married men of importance--one the ptil and the other a young man of recognized promise. Additionally, one of the most attractive girls of Kirngu, who was much sought after by young men, was a mafa. Mafa wives work hard, enjoy reasonable freedom, have land, and accumulate wealth. A captive wife, at least initially, would not enjoy all these; most notably her right to divorce was restricted. Even should she divorce her husband because of flagrant and publicly recognized abuse, she could not return to her home. On the other hand, as near as can be reconstructed today, her domestic chores were little different from other wives. Today non-captive mafa wives have virtually the same status as other wives.

The critical factor in understanding the position of female as opposed to male mafa is tied to the heritability of the status in a patrilineal society. A female mafa is a dead-end; she will not produce more mafa unless she happens to marry a man who himself is a mafa. Her status is not something she or her family has to feel is being inflicted upon her children. These facts undoubtedly account for the better adjustment attributed to female captives. The preference for female captives and the non-heritability of their status also accounts for the discrepancy between statements about captives and their scarcity today; most captives were women who do not have mafa descendants.

The status of mafa is abhorrent to free men. It represents a loss of control over one's condition and destiny--a very important theme in Margi culture. Since mafakur is heritable through men, they know that their sons, too, would be mafa, and thus their position of

dependency would be perpetuated into the future. Thus men say that they would go to any lengths to avoid capture in war, and it seems unlikely that many men were ever successfully acquired this way.

Mafakur as a form of punishment was less avoidable but possibly very rare. Traditional law suggests that the punishment could be resorted to freely but specific cases are nonexistent. All such punishments were at the discretion of the ptil. There is ample evidence that most of his judicial actions involved arbitration and mediation, but for certain severe breaches of good order mafakur could be adjudged. The crime mentioned most frequently was thlikul (roughly, premeditated murder), but there is a tradition that says in ancient times thefts of sorghum (guinea corn), roselle, or chickens also were punished by mafakur. Sorghum is the staple crop, roselle seeds were substituted for sorghum in time of famine, and chicken was probably the only meat eaten consistently by most Margi in former times, as it is the most frequently consumed meat today. Whether such punishment for the theft of these was ever administered seems doubtful, but the tradition emphasizes the power of the ptil and reminds people of a past when things were less plentiful.

A mafa whose status was the result of a crime belonged to the ptil. No one today can remember such an individual, but his position must have been very difficult. Generally, breaches of public order carry little stigma, but the crimes for which mafakur was the punishment were much more serious. Since the status is heritable for men there was no relief or end to the punishment. Even though the crime which gave rise to the status was committed in one generation, the punishment continued to subsequent generations. However, under the circumstances it seems very unlikely that the miscreant would ever be able to marry and have a

normal life. Normally a master is expected to treat his mafa like his dependent, to provide him with bridewealth for at least one wife and to take care of his basic needs, but a ptil would not provide these for a criminal mafa. For a criminal who already had a family the situation is unclear. Some say that they, too, would become mafa but this seems improbable. Surely, he would not have been able to retain wives and his children would probably be taken care of by his zamu.

The mafa who were created by capture or as punishment held statuses which were not primarily related to the subsistence or production economy. No one suggests that mafa were taken because their labor was needed, rather it seems to have served largely as wife-recruiting and ransom-collecting institutions. In addition, it was an adjunct to warfare and the boundary-maintaining functions of the ptilkur. Mafakur as punishment was essentially a legal institution and roughly analogous to life imprisonment. It cannot be denied that economic services were performed by both types of mafa, particularly from the rare male captive, but it is unlikely that either type was recruited to fulfill the need for labor. Nor is there any evidence that their numbers were such that they could have made even a substantial contribution to the economy.

Mafakur by barter presents a somewhat different situation. These were typically men, acquired with an eye to their potential as workers, who could found a line of mafa. Mafa whom I have interviewed are all of this type or descendants of persons bartered into mafakur. It is improbable that criminals or male captives were often bartered, since no one would purchase a mafa unless it were known that he accepted his status. The stability of the bartered mafa is related to the legality and acceptability of a purchase or barter transaction and to the fact that the contract was a social agreement, accepted by the family or community of the mafa. As a consequence of these factors, the mafa himself accepted the legality of his position and

alternatives to his status were effectively removed; neither of these factors seems to have been operative in the other two types of mafakur.

I was told that orphans were the most common source of persons bartered into mafakur. Numerous parent surrogates are found in large families but not all families are so large, and it sometimes happens that no one is able to care for another nursing infants, consequently they might be bartered to another family in another place who was better able to care for them. One of the young men of Kirngu had been raised by local Fulani after his mother died in his infancy. In his case, it was not a permanent exchange since his father paid the Fulani for their services and the boy eventually came back to live with his own people. But many would not have been able to afford to support the child, in which case the alternative would be death or barter for the child. No one believes that such transactions were motivated by a desire for economic gain. It would be humiliating for a family and they would certainly not agree to it in any but the most extreme cases, but apparently it has been an acceptable alternative for some.

In other cases, conditions of a severe famine have prompted villages to barter one or more of their members in exchange for food.[3] Although this was infrequent, it is important here because my only first hand report of the purchase of a mafa was of this type. In Kirngu there lived a very old mafa, Birma Dadlu[4] who told such a story to account for his position. He had been born a Higi in a hamlet near Kamale, approximately fifteen miles further into the mountains. During a severe famine he and his father[5] were traded to a Margi of Wano, a hamlet in Gulagu, for a forgotten number of head baskets of guinea corn. This might have been during

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[3] Kirk-Greene reports that during the famine of 1921 a Matakam sold his "niece" to a Fulani for thirteen calabashes of guinea corn (1958:66n).

[4] In the chapter in Miers and Kopytoff I used initials instead of names. Herein, pseudonyms--with the same initials--are used.

[5] Unfortunately, I failed to discover if they had been mafa prior to the transaction, though I think it likely.

the Mandara famine of 1899-1904 which followed a locust plague. Dadlu accepted the legality and the morality of his status and seemed to take pride in that he and his father had saved his former home. When he was asked why he had never run away, he obviously found the suggestion dishonorable both to himself and his former hamlet, and he replied, "But where could I run?"

Dadlu did not remain at Wano, for when he was a young man he was purchased by one of ptil Wampana's wives. (It is noteworthy that women could hold mafa.) Eventually he was inherited by her son, Wagla. When Wagla succeeded to the office of ptil and when the Birma--an office reserved for mafa--died, Dadlu acceded to the position and held it through the succeeding changes in ptil until his death in 1960.

The position of Dadlu and two others, Wancina and Kaya, who were also mafa, make it possible to examine the status as it functioned in the contemporary period. Dadlu's life had been far from successful at the personal level, despite the prestige and importance associated with the office of Birma. He had never had a firmly established kyi--one wife, a daughter and a few iji were the extent of his family. In his old age he lived alone in a very dilapidated house near the ptil's compound. He owned little and usually went about in a ram skin loin garment covered by a ragged gown; but, in truth, he lacked for nothing important. Ptil Yarkur regarded him with true affection as did virtually everyone who lived in Kirngu and many others as well. He was something of a legendary character and was treated with more respect than his impoverished, impotent condition warranted.

Upon his death, his funeral revealed much of the depth of the feeling for him. Old men are not mourned in the fashion of tragic death; instead their funerals are festive and their iji

celebrate the passing of a good and full life. The fact that Dadlu had few descendants did not detract form his funeral, for all of Kirngu called him, "ciji." One of the prosperous and admired Dadlu's son, although he had none. The funeral took place in the square in front of the royal compound and was attended by the entire community as well as many from his daughter's hamlet. Three surviving sons of ptil Wampana, all distinguished and honored men in the kingdom were the chief mourners and periodically exerted everyone to dance and sing. Even ptil Yarkur attended, although it had been said that a ptil should not attend funerals, and he attended no other during my residence in Kirngu, not even that of his zamu. So many took the role of descendants of Dadlu that ptil made a joke about the great number of Dadlu's progeny. A final note on Dadlu's life and additional light on the status of mafakur was revealed at the funeral: he had been a warrior of note and had killed a man in a raid on Yaza soon after coming to Kirngu. I was told that such loyalty among mafa was not uncommon.

A second mafa presents a striking contrast to Dadlu. Wancina is one of the important men of Kirngu; his father was the Birma who preceded Dadlu, and possibly he profited from his father's accomplishments. He had only one wife who was a deaf mute,[5a] a condition which may have made her relatively unattractive as a wife and suggests that Wancina may have had difficulty finding a wife when he was young. However, the marriage turned out to be very advantageous, for she had ten living children in 1960, nine of whom were girls; and although Margi prefer sons, the daughters were extremely accomplished women. They were known to be talented and hard working. One married a leading young man of Kirngu, another married ptil and was so much sought after that he had to pay a very high bridewealth for her, and a third was

[5a] I knew three such women and one man which seems a high number in a relatively small area, but I have no other evidence which suggests that this was a particular problem.

omething of the leader of the local girls and the hamlet's best singer. Wancina benefited both materially and in prestige from the size and reputation of his family.

His greatest prestige came from his long association with ptil Yarkur; they had grown up as neighbors and friends. Although, there were wealthier men of more senior positions who advised Yarkur, few had greater influence than Wancina. His position was entirely unofficial, but nonetheless it lent him a respect matched only by the most prestigious men of the ptilkur. Unlike Dadlu, Wancina dressed well and owned the shield of a warrior which he displayed on ceremonial occasions. As Dadlu became more infirm, Wancina, who it may be remembered was the son of a former Birma, assumed more and more ceremonial importance in the ptilkur. (He was an excellent informant and authority on the rituals of the ptilkur.)

Following Dadlu's death, everyone was greatly surprised when Wancina refused the office of Birma. Although the offer was made with the ptil's knowledge and consent, because it came through an intermediary, it was -possible for Wancina to refuse without offending Yarkur publicly. Perhaps the most surprising thing about the refusal was that it was phrased in terms of a rejection of the status of mafa. He said that his "eyes had been opened," by which he meant that he would not acquiesce to his perpetuation as a mafa. To everyone in Kirngu his reaction was inexplicable, for he had never been known to express such sentiments. He never indicated to me, either before he refused the position or after, that he was ashamed or even dissatisfied with the status of mafa. He was my principal informant on mafakur and he was completely open in discussing it. In fact, until his refusal, I was not sure that mafakur, per se, was outlawed or that anyone in Kirngu knew that time had in anyway changed conditions regarding the status.

I believe that the principal reason behind Wancina's behavior is to be found in the nature of the role of Birma and its peculiar relationship with the ptil. The Birma had functions beyond

his ritual and political ones, in that he was expected to be the ptil's personal servant. Old Dadlu regularly swept the square and did other menial tasks for ptil, and I believe it was this against which Wancina rebelled. He felt his achieved position was above that of these aspects of the Birma role. The role would require him to be at least nominally a servant to a man with whom his relationship had been strikingly different.

His refusal did not seem to change his relationship with ptil, who was technically removed from the rejection since the offer was made by someone else, and less than a month later Wancina was virtually acting as the Birma. This was apparently at ptil's request who claimed that the new Birma, Kaya, did not know the rituals, but it also seemed that ptil did not really like Kaya. On this occasion ptil and the Birma had to travel back to Old Kirngu on the mountain, and it is also likely that ptil preferred to be accompanied by someone he knew better.

The third example of a mafa was Kaya, a man without the stature and knowledge of Wancina. Although unrelated to Wancina,[5b] who was about five years his senior, he lived near him and was often seen with him. He lived with a daughter of about fifteen, having recently been deserted by his wife. When I first met Kaya, his circumstances were most meager; he lived in an abandoned compound, had no farm, but worked for Wancina. His impoverished condition may have been, in part, related to his status as a mafa, but it should be pointed out that impoverishment and dependency are also characteristic of other Margi who are not mafa. All men, poor or not, are expected to behave with dignity and self-respect and consequently be treated with respect by others, but this did not characterize Kaya. There was something servile and obsequious in his manner. Although these characteristics were completely lacking in

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[5b] In Miers and Kopytoff 1977:95, I erroneously stated that they were related.

Wancina, who bore himself with a dignity that commanded respect, it was general public consensus that Kaya's behavior was appropriate to a mafa while Wancina was the exception.

There was a humiliating incident which seemed typical of Kaya's fate. He lured away the wife of a man from another hamlet. She wanted to become his wife, but her husband wanted her back and would not accept a bridewealth settlement. The husband complained to ptil as judge and as Kaya's master. Although it is unusual for a husband to want an eloped wife to return, legal precedent is clearly on his side. Although ptil would have been willing to help Kaya with a bridewealth settlement, he had no course but to tell him that the wife must be returned. Popularly, it was felt that Kaya should have known that he did not have a right to the woman once the husband indicated his view and she should have returned without having brought the ptil into the matter. The hamlet had been embarrassed by Kaya's behavior.

The worst example of Kaya's ineptitude came from a dispute with the makarama (prime minister). This occurred after Kaya became Birma and may indicate that he was testing his new status. If so, Makarama, who was a jovial but volatile man, was a poor choice as an adversary. They had an argument over money which seemed trivial but quickly escalated as public arguments are apt to do. Heated words were spoken and Makarama badly beat Kaya, a much smaller man. Again, Kaya was humiliated. I remember how his daughter cried at her father's embarrassment. He was not cowed by the beating and continued to argue with Makarama, but word of the fight quickly passed through the hamlet and once again Kaya's prestige suffered.

The question of the "ownership" of these three individuals and their families is a difficult topic. Even though ownership is today outlawed, it is clear that the traditional practice was not what we understand by the term. The information is clearest for Dadlu. He was owned and worked as a member of his masters' households throughout his life, though his responsibilities

decreased as he got older and particularly as he became infirm. It is possible that his ritual responsibilities may have lessened some of his labor obligations, but it is clear that throughout his life he was a laborer--though hardly more so than any dependent in a compound. The title of ownership is clear until the time of his installation as Birma. At that time we note that he apparently ceased to belong to any individual and became a permanent adjunct of the office of ptil, for he served all ptil subsequent to Wagla. He was said to be, and admitted to being, the mafa of ptil Yarkur though Yarkur was not a lineal descendant of Wagla or any of the intervening ptil. Normally, it is said that mafa are inherited and indeed, Dadlu passed to Wagla by rules of inheritance.

The ownership of Dadlu might have been clearer simply because he was a first generation mafa. Such is not the case for either Wancina or Kaya, both of whom are also descendants of Higi. They were said to be mafa of the ptil although the title was not clear. It is possible that with the passage of time specific ownership might change to general ownership. However, it is clear that title is less important than the existence of the status; that is, mafa exist regardless of whether specific ownership is determined or not. It seems significant that when ptil Yarkur married a daughter of Wancina and when one of his sons married Kaya's daughter, bridewealth was paid to the fathers although they were, presumably, mafa of the man making the payments. In fact, ownership of Wancina and Kaya was not a topic of any importance and my attempts to clarify the topic led to contradictions.

When Kaya became Birma, the statement that he was a mafa of the ptil took on added significance. He was from that time in a position very similar to Dadlu's, a personal servant of the ptil, a position in which he took pride. He worked in ptil's fields, he cleaned the courtyard in front of the royal compound, he did minor public works in the hamlet, and he looked after ptil's

compound. For there services he received sustenance and security. He ate well and never had to fear scarcity. Had his marriage been successful, his wife might have been able to aid him considerably. She would have had no responsibilities to ptil, yet she would have been provided with farm land by virtue of being Kaya's wife. Assuming that she would have shared with Kaya, he might have prospered, but circumstances, or perhaps his ineptitude, conspired against him and the security of his position remained his only asset.

Ownership is most anomalous when applied to Wancina. The situation should have been similar to that of Kaya; but while appointment to Birma clarified Kaya's position, Wancina's refusal to take the office implies a freedom not associated with ownership. Although Wancina seems to have suffered in his choice of a wife as a result of his status, it did not completely handicap him. He became a substantial farmer who had his own land and through the hard work of his family he prospered. Certainly no one interfered with Wancina's affairs, and it is doubtful if even ptil would have attempted to do so. This seems especially true since he did not attempt to compel Wancina to become Birma although he obviously would have liked him to do so.

All of this was confused by the circumstances of statutory emancipation. Questions which attempted to explore the limits of ownership were recognized as irrelevant. It was said that no one would attempt to force Wancina to do this or that because it was no longer possible. Yet this may have only rationalized the situation, for it seems apparent that Wancina was virtually a free man as a consequence of the status he achieved in the community and not because he had been freed by external authority. Perhaps Wancina's achievements could not have happened in earlier times. Certainly, conditions in 1960 lent authority to his status which would have previously been missing. He did not view his personal accomplishments as unusual, and he claimed that his father was a prosperous man, though Margi often exaggerate the

accomplishments of their forebears. Frankly, it is difficult to imagine a mafa with Wancina's independence during the reign of ptil Wampana, the very time in which Dadlu and his father were sold into mafakur. Wancina remains an exception to the rules of Margi society--rules which seem of more interest to the anthropologist than his informants.

In ordinary conversation a Margi has (aga) property, but he is the master (mthlagu) of a mafa. The latter concept emphasizes reciprocal obligations as well as status differences. The status of a mafa is very much like that of a minor child except in the matter of inheritance. A mafa is generally treated like a dependent with all the mutual responsibilities implicit in that relationship. On the other hand the mafa is not treated or thought of as a minor. He is recognized as a capable adult with adult responsibilities and problems. However, if a mafa stole food or property, his master (assuming one to be recognized) might be fined on the assumption that he should have taken care of the mafa better. No one knew of an instance of this sort actually happening, and in general mafa enjoy good reputations as law abiding persons. Mafa are not regarded as inherently inferior persons nor are they regarded as being strange or awe inspiring. Dadlu's later fame was less a result of his status as a mafa than of his political status and incredible longevity.

One exotic practice has tended to exaggerate the rights which a master has over a mafa. When a king died, one or more mafa were killed to be buried with him. Older informants report that this custom persisted as recently as the death of King Wampana, and his eldest son not only tends a shrine to his father but a mafa shrine as well. This custom seems to imply that masters could kill their mafa, but it overlooks the fact that the wife of a ptil who cooked for him was also put to death. Explanations for both deaths were the same; these were people to serve the king in the afterworld. In fact, no man has the legal right to abuse a mafa or a wife.

In general, it seems that although a new mafa may be regarded as an acquired possession, with the passage of time and in succeeding generations the issue of specific ownership becomes moot, with the result that mafa become attached to communities more than individuals. It is in the nature of that attachment that we must seek an understanding of the role of mafakur in Margi society.

It is impossible to know the numbers of mafa or their proportion of the total population in former times. Knowledgeable old persons estimate that there might have been as many as one hundred--men, women, and children--in a kingdom. This is consistent with my estimate based upon a count of mafa graves. Virtually all mafa were linked to the royal village and the only known mafa burial ground in Gulagu adjoined the cemetery of the Gidam clan. There are more than 200 graves of Gidam still visible but only 23 of mafa. Considering that the Gidam are but one clan of the kingdom, it is apparent that mafa were a very small percentage of the population.

So small a group raises questions about the significance of the institution. Even were the group several times the estimate above, it is unlikely that mafa ever constituted an important economic force in the community. Nor would raids have been so frequent--and successful--to have been a significant wife-recruiting technique. The role of mafakur, I suggest, is to be seen not in terms of what mafa did but rather in terms of what they were in the context of Margi society.

Margi lay great importance upon identity--hamlet, clan, or ethnicity depending upon the context. Yet in mafakur they seem to acknowledge the existence of an intermediate identity--the resident outsider, to use Adams' term (1975:226), someone who is in the society yet not fully a member of it. Mafa were most often literally aliens, that is, captives or those bartered from another society. Criminal mafa might be viewed as having been stripped of their citizenship. In

this context the possible relationship between the word mafa and the society of the same name is more suggestive.[6] It reveals a marginality and an integration which is achieved by institutionalizing the marginality. Thus mafakur is a limbic institution, for its members exist at the edge of society, neither enfranchised Margi nor true aliens. In this context, discussions of economic value or the question of ownership are irrelevant.

The second non-kin social division of Margi society is between "ordinary" Margi, called mbilim, and ngkyagu, the craft specialists. Blacksmithing, leather working, cicatrizing, and mortuary services are tasks reserved to ngkyagu males, while the manufacture of pottery is the exclusive province of ngkyagu females.[7]

The products of the smith include: hoes, knives, and sickles, the three most important items of farming; instruments such as knives, adzes, razors, needles, and tweezers; weapons such as spears, arm-daggers, arrow points, and "throwing knives" which might be better called battle axes; and ornaments such as bracelets, bells, beads, chains, and charms. The leather products of ngkyagu included the ram skin loin garment or pizhi and a goat skin fringe called dzar the traditional clothing of men and women respectively, only the later of which was much in evidence in 1960.

Ngkyagu are significantly more numerous than mafa and play a far more utilitarian role in the society. There are no physical or linguistic criteria which set them apart from other Margi. They have distinctive customs but these are not more numerous than those associated with clans

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[6] The word slave is, of course, derived from Slav, reflecting the fact that Slavic peoples were captured and made bondsmen in the middle ages. I have been told often by ethnographers of other societies which use the name of a neighboring group to designate slave-like persons, and among the Ngwaxi , a Margi-Bura group, they use "fali" which is the name of a neighboring society (Kraft n. d.).

[7] In some previous publications I have referred to female ngkyagu as kwingkyagu. That is grammatically correct and one hears the term, but Margi critics have convinced me that I am guilty of pedantry. The feminine prefix is not used in the vast majority of instances.

and regions, and their social organization is not different from the Margi pattern. There are only a few ngkyagu clans, and in Gulagu there are apparently only two Kwamdu and Kwanji. However, some Margi clans such as Icogwa have ngkyagu members though the caste distinctions are all pervasive. I knew no ngkyagu of such clans and am, therefore unable to explain how the cross-cutting categories might be articulated.

Although the cognoscenti might recognize ngkyagu by their rustic, conservative behavior and dress, they would pass unnoticed through a strange hamlet. In a generic sense they are Margi and in that sense are recognized by other Margi, but in ordinary conversations they are ngkyagu and the sociological separation between the two groups is critical. In general no Margi mbilim will marry an ngkyagu nor will an ngkyagu marry a Margi mbilim. They constitute an endogamous craft-caste within the society. [8]

Ngkyagu are popularly conceived of by Europeans as "blacksmiths" for this is their principal occupation; and males are so listed in tax censuses. But unfortunately these enumerations are so significantly and obviously in error that it is difficult to know how many there are in the population. For example, the 1959 tax census listed only ten for all of Gulagu, and the hamlet of Humbili showed none, yet that is where the ptil of the ngkyagu lived. The numbers are probably misleading in part because the enumerators considered smithing an occupation rather than a status and therefore did not list women or children or even ngkyagu males not actively engaged in the technology.

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[8] I am well aware of the difficulty and controversy involved in applying the term caste to Africa in general and the Margi, in particular. This has been discussed, including specifically the Margi data and my position, by Tuden and Plotnicov (1970: 15-18). I see no merit in reserving the term caste for so specialized an institution that it fits only the data from South Asia, which would not only ignore historical precedent but require a new terminology and thus perpetuate idiosyncratic discussions of social phenomena. For my purposes I stand by my earlier definition, "a hereditary endogamous group who are socially differentiated by prescribed behavior" (1970:62).

By my census the ngkyagu at Humbili, Makwan, and Kirngu comprised approximately 13% of the total population ranging from 33% at Makwan to 0% at Kirngu. However, this figure is probably too high for Gulagu as a whole since none of these is a new hamlet where the conservative ngkyagu have rarely migrated. I think that 5-8% might be a reasonable estimate for all of Gulagu.

The distinction between mbilim and ngkyagu represents a fundamental division in Margi social organization. However, any discussion must initially affirm that there is an underlying similarity which holds them together despite the sociological division. They share the same world view, and the criteria which distinguish their clans are of the same order as those differentiating all clans. Apart from unique clan rituals, ngkyagu observe the same public rituals as their Margi neighbors. When one dies, his funeral is attended by Margi in accordance with his age, sex, status, and the canons of neighborliness. There is no hamlet which is composed even predominantly of ngkyagu although as a consequence of patrilocality they, like all Margi, tend to live in lineal clusters.

There is a reserve and a restraint in the daily intercourse between mbilim and ngkyagu, to be sure, yet among neighbors there is a surprising amount of visiting and casualness. Although I never knew any truly wealthy ngkyagu, their economic level seemed little different from the bulk of the society and perhaps slightly above average. They are very traditional in their orientation and more conservative than even the Dzerngu Margi as a whole. They have done little to take advantage of expanding markets, cash crops, education, and other consequences of incipient modernization except in the area of pottery making which will be discussed below. No ngkyagu I knew grew cash crops and none sent his children to school. But none of this makes ngkyagu truly unusual, only a bit more conservative than other Dzirngu Margi.

There are, however, areas in which ngkyagu and mbilim are rigidly distinct. First and foremost is the marital prohibition. Additionally, mbilim and ngkyagu will not eat together nor share eating vessels. An mbilim will not drink beer brewed by an ngkyagu, and although ngkyagu will drink a mbilim's beer, he must drink it from his own vessel. Ngkyagu may sometimes be recognized by the distinctive container (dzagwa), a tightly woven basket with a leather rim, which they carry with them on trips and to markets. There are also a few ngkyagu customs which Margi consider qualitatively different from their own. Foremost among these are alleged dietary differences. Ngkyagu are reputed to eat snakes, lizards, monkeys, and other things which mbilim find singularly reprehensible. Ngkyagu clans, like all clans, have distinctive burial customs, but one clan has a custom so strange to mbilim that it imparts to all ngkyagu the aura of that distinctiveness. This ngkyagu clan requires the bodies of very important men to remain unburied for three days, after which a portion of the skin is stripped from the bloated corpse and buried in his compound. This entire scene--the bloated corpse, the stench, the skinning--is bizarre beyond the wildest notions of most Margi and reinforces their notions of the strangeness of ngkyagu -- though most ngkyagu do not share this custom.[9]

The effect of these behavioral differences is to establish a social distance between mbilim and ngkyagu, but the nature of the distance is not rationalized by Margi. Whereas one might expect an explanatory myth or historical legend to validate the dichotomy, there is none. When asked why the difference, mbilim respond with non sequiturs or patently tautological answers. One mbilim said, "an ngkyagu is the most talaka (commoner) in our area and moreover they eat things like donkey, monkey, snakes and others which we will not eat." Being "more" talaka seems of no relevance (and note that he did not relate them to the mafa) and the other features

[9] I observed this in the kingdom of Dluku, and it is reported also for the Kilba, Higi, and "Fali of Wuba" by Meek (1933, I:197, 257, 301). Neither of the ngkyagu clans in Gulagu practice it.

amount to saying that they differ because they are different. Also such statements are misleading, for some Margi clans from the Babal region, as we have noted, also eat snakes, but they are not considered to be socially distinct or peculiar for that reason. There is not even an attempt to justify the separation on historical grounds in the Dzirngu area, for although ngkyagu clans have legends of origins, no one suggests that they are qualitatively different from mbilim because they represent different historical traditions. In some other areas, particularly around Lassa in the Babal area and Hilde in the Titum area, I was told that ngkyagu were of Higi origin. However, this was only a partial explanation for their peculiar status since there were others of Higi origin in those areas who were not regarded as déclassé. In short, Margi offer no justification for the separation of ngkyagu from mbilim.

What can be learned from their statements about ngkyagu does, however, reveal something of their values and the quality of the relationship between the two groups. All statements emphasize a fundamental difference, a difference which in itself justifies the differential behavior. History and logic notwithstanding, ngkyagu by virtue of their being ngkyagu are ascriptively different. The emphasis, however, is only upon difference, for it would be unwarranted to say that mbilim despise them and there is no traditional enmity between the two. Many mbilim do hold ngkyagu in awe, attributing to them capabilities which they quite likely may not possess. Margi children in particular tell bizarre tales about ngkyagu and are fearful of them.

Margi, as stated earlier, are very tolerant of variation, but that is not to say that they are indifferent to it. Variation, particularly when it comes in the form of custom associated with another group, is regarded with interest and awe. There is a good deal of stereotyping and a certain naive credulity in their views of others. Although ngkyagu are not in the same class as

members of another society, they are different enough to be regarded with much the same wonder and fascination. When a mbilim remarks that ngkyagu "are truly different people," the comment is more significant as a measure of social distance than as an accurate characterization.

In contrast to such statements about the differences between the two groups by mbilim, Ngkyagu describe the differentiation in terms of the division of labor. They are quick to point out the mutually exclusive activities which are characteristic of each group, and a few ngkyagu emphasize that these activities are complementary so that there is mutual dependence between the two. Mbilim are not, of course, oblivious to the specialties of the ngkyagu, but none I have known has recognized the interdependence between the two groups.

When one examines these contrasting views, it is easy to note the realism and the pragmatism of the ngkyagu view. This is a consequence of the ngkyagu's recognition of the importance of his technological skills to mbilim, but it is also a consequence of the differential contact between the two groups. On the average, mbilim encounter ngkyagu infrequently and under special circumstances, as when his skills or services are needed. On the whole mbilim are not well informed about ngkyagu customs. Many of their allegations turn out to be exaggerations or false (including the allegation that they eat snakes, though some might). Mbilim who accompanied or assisted me were fascinated by the ngkyagu though their discoveries more often tended to confirm rather than change their attitudes. When sparks would shower from the ngkyagu's hearth, an mbilim might remark, "Wonderful!" Yet when he heard the same ngkyagu complain about the jealousy of his wives, he was not struck with the ordinariness of that observation.

To be fair, it must be noted some mbilim who live near ngkyagu may be better informed about their customs. One such man was virtually an expert on ngkyagu customs and he seemed

to interact with them openly and naturally. However, it should be equally stressed that he never ate with them and would not think of taking one for his wife. The institution of the caste system was just as real to him as other-mbilim but it lacked the aura of mysterious justification. When he was asked why ngkyagu and Margi do not intermarry or eat together, he answered, "It is not our custom," rather than attributing alien-seeming characteristics to them.

Ngkyagu perceptions of the differences between the two are also lacking in the mysterious justification stated by most mbilim. Ngkyagu live surrounded by mbilim, are very much aware of their life and customs, and attribute no exotic characteristics to them. But the greater realism and pragmatism of the ngkyagu and those mbilim like the man mentioned above do not negate the qualitative difference between the two groups. The mbilim explanations, "They are truly different," or "They do strange things," go to the heart of caste separation.

Mbilim are aware of the occupational specialization of ngkyagu, in fact they embellish it by attributing occupations to ngkyagu which they do not have. For example, it is reputed that ngkyagu are the society's diviners, medical specialists, carvers, and musicians. However, none of these is exclusively associated with the caste in the recent past. Both diviner and medical specialist are regarded with awe by the general populace and both deliberately cloak themselves, in a certain amount of secrecy and mystery, In this and in the way in which their professions deviate from the occupational norm, they are similar to ngkyagu, and it seems probable that this accounts for the tendency for Margi to suggest that these occupations fall within the ngkyagu caste. [Wood] Carver is more puzzling unless it connotes the maker of things in a way similar to the ngkyagu as the maker of products. In fact, the best carver in Gulagu was a mbilim who was a deaf mute. Many mbilim are accomplished drummers or lute players, though it is true that two instruments, the nzir (a type of drum) and the kiriharahara (a bowed lute), are made and played

exclusively by ngkyagu. It is also true that mbilim believe that ngkyagu are unusually talented as musicians. It should be noted that among some Margi groups not all occupational specialties are consistently reserved for ngkyagu. In the south, mortuary duties are done by members of the decedent's clan and in some other areas pottery is made by anyone with the requisite skills. But among the Dzirngu, all traditional technological specialties, save smelting, are thought to fall within the province of the ngkyagu. The only exceptions are among skills or specialties which are not considered to be traditionally Margi.

Ngkyagu are well aware of the attitudes and feelings which mbilim hold, and in some instances it can be seen that they are encouraged. The widely held belief that ngkyagu eat snakes--the most frequently mentioned differentia--leads mbilim to give ngkyagu snakes; I knew of this happening several times. Once when I found a dead snake near an ngkyagu's compound, he indicated that it had been a gift but that neither he nor his neighbors ate snakes. But this was told in a sense of conspiratorial bonhomie, and I surmise that he enjoyed and encouraged the image of a snake-eating mysterious person. The distinctive status ascribed to ngkyagu is not one which they reject or to which they object, rather it is one which they are capable of using to their advantage. It gives them a special identity and awe which seem to compensate for their social isolation.

There are two basic components to the Margi caste system, a behavioral and occupational differentiation which is "justified" by an ideological separation. The separation of mbilim and ngkyagu is a part of the order of the world. It does not have to be rational;-it is in the nature of things. The differences are manifestations of the order which is unassailable. However, such an explanation ignores the integration of Margi society and fails to recognize that the caste system, regardless of how or why it originated, is not simply a mechanical division of society.

Ngkyagu are accurate in noting the mutual dependence of the two groups. Each relies upon the other, and it is this mutual need that checks the differentiation. It has already been noted that although the ngkyagu are the society's blacksmiths they are not its smelters. That exception more than any other illustrates the interlocking nature of the caste system. Smithing, the core of the ngkyagu activities, is the basis of all Margi technology, and the advantages of iron implements is manifest in their agriculture. Without an iron technology they could not produce food sufficient to sustain their society at its present size or complexity. Control of this vital knowledge is entirely in the hands of the ngkyagu, but smelting, the even more basic process of extracting the crude iron from ore, was done only by mbilim. Today, the abundance of scrap iron and steel of European and Asian manufacture has obviated the smelting process. However, the pattern which is supplanting the old one is that mbilim search out the scrap so that they still maintain a semblance of control over the sources of iron.[10]

This balanced interdependence between smelter and smith seems to lie at the heart of the Dzirngu caste system, but unfortunately we are not able to relate it to other "blacksmith" castes of the Mandaras or Nigeria. Although both Meek and Lembzat mention the existence of these castes, any discussion of smelting has been neglected. The disappearance of the technology today may mean that we shall never know how typical was the Margi system.

Without doubt, the most important items made by ngkyagu are the agricultural implements, specifically hoes, sickles, and axes. Food production is achieved through a value system which emphasizes that farming is the only appropriate activity of men and women and a technology which provides them with the tools which permit the exploitation of their

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[10] This mutual dependence may not have characterized the Margi Babal where iron ore might not have been so readily available. I was unable to discover a smelting tradition in the plains; whether from lack of time and diligence, a disappearance of the tradition with earlier acculturation, or an absence of the tradition I cannot say. For a brief discussion of this problem see Vaughan 1970:81-82.

environment. There is an incongruity in the system; although Margi values dictate that all men must farm, they require the services of skilled technicians to produce their farming implements. The dilemma is resolved by having a group within the society who are permissible deviants--technologists who do not farm, or for that matter, who probably have little time for it. Furthermore, as we have seen, the dependence which mbilim have upon ngkyagu for their tools is balanced by the dependence ngkyagu have upon mbilim for iron and the produce from the fields. Not only does this interdependence integrate the society, it also helps alleviate problems of unbalanced dependence upon others which Margi so rigorously avoid; in this system there is mutual dependence.

The interdependence is formalized in the caste system; it does not exist as a dyadic contract between client and patron. It is for this reason that mbilim are unaware of the mutual dependence, for it does not exist at the individual level so much as at the more abstract group level. At the individual level the situation appears similar to that of any labor specialization, but at the social level it may be seen that the specialization is an ascriptive group characteristic and reflects a symbiotic relationship which binds mbilim and ngkyagu to their mutual benefit. The caste system may be thought of as a system of recruitment which insures that there will always be a supply of technologists, but which at the same time relegates these specialists to a limited position in the society, thus effectively prohibiting them from using their position to dominate the society.

Among the services provided by ngkyagu apart from smithing, the Margi Dzirngu rate the mortuary duties as most important. This reflects the general importance with which they regard rites of passage. Ngkyagu are responsible for preparing the corpse, providing the drumming for the dancing at the funeral, transporting the corpse from the funeral site near its

home to the clan burial grounds, digging the grave and interring the body. In approximately a week they will return to the grave and prepare it for perpetuity. Knowing the regard with which morticians are held in so many cultures, it is difficult not to interpret mbilim attitudes toward ngkyagu as a consequence of the latter's association with the dead. But this is not borne out, for no one seems unduly disturbed by corpses; and as we have observed, some Margi Titum mbilim do their own undertaking. Further there was never a suggestion of ritual pollution being associated either with corpses or ngkyagu.

The recognized symbols of the caste are the nzir, the forge, and the tools of the smithy. The tuyere (dzvu), in particular, takes on some of the mystical properties associated with ngkyagu. Broken portions of dzvu in association with other items are sometimes seen in fields along paths. When one asks the purpose of this assemblage, the answer is invariably phrased that it protects the crops from women who might steal as they journey. If one asks what will happen to the thief, informants consistently mention difficulty in childbirth along with general misfortune. Although further questioning will reveal that the assemblage would also provide protection from male thieves, the initial references to women are significant.

The dzvu, which is the only consistent element of the protective assemblage, has an unmistakable association with sex. Of all pottery items in Margi material culture the dzvu is the only item which is made by men; it is made by male ngkyagu. Furthermore, the shape of the dzvu is inescapably phallic. The sexual symbolism in the shape, manufacture, and magical use of the dzvu adds another dimension to the mystery and power ascribed to the ngkyagu caste, albeit a dimension which is not consciously recognized by Margi.

The curious political relationship between mbilim and ngkyagu should be noted, for it demonstrates that the interdependence goes beyond technology and the division of labor and is a part of the entire social fabric of Margi society.

It will be remembered that both the founders of Sukur and Gulagu had peculiar relationships with ngkyagu (pp. 53 & 55). The most dramatic perpetuation of that tradition is found in the requirement that the ptil of Gulagu, a mbilim, must take one wife from the ngkyagu caste. She becomes a full member of his compound, and her children will be ordinary children of the ptil. Patrilineal descent insures that they will not be ngkyagu. Ngkyagu from Sukur have very prominent roles in the investiture of ptil Gulagu. That installation must await their arrival and their acts are considered crucial. In fact, it is popularly said that the ngkyagu "make" the ptil, for one of them shaves his head leaving the hairlock which is characteristic of the office. When the ptil dies, he is buried in the same fashion as the ptil ngkyagu, seated on an iron stool and surrounded by charcoal. Finally, the ptil's council on ritual occasions may be said to include the ptil ngkyagu. This must be phrased carefully since he is not formally a member and only sits near the council on these occasions, though he does receive specified portions of food which is divided among the council members.

The ptil ngkyagu is the formal authority of the caste and in former times he was the final authority for members of the caste. He was expected to settle disputes, administer justice, collect taxes and tribute, and coordinate public tasks among the caste, He is their representative to ptil Gulagu and it is in this capacity that he functions as a near member of the council. The numbers of ngkyagu are so few that his task is not only relatively simple but largely informal as well.

The ptil ngkyagu is not surrounded with the ritual and ideology of the king, but he does wear a hairlock similar to that of the ptil and a double iron bracelet, an insignia of his office. He is expected to act as the ptil's personal blacksmith and personally to oversee the burial of the ptil.

It is possible that historical explanations account for these connections between the ngkyagu and the government of the ptilkur (Meek 1933, I: 228n), but there are much more suggestive explanations to be found in the total organization of the ptilkur which we shall investigate in Chapter 8. But here let it be noted that there is a conspicuous tendency for the formal structure of the ptilkur to reveal the various groups which made up the population at its founding including both ngkyagu and mafa. The peculiar relationships between ngkyagu and the office of ptil is to be understood in the symbolic dimension of that position as well as the founding legend.

In summary, the basis of the Margi caste system is clearly technological; most of the truly distinctive characteristics of ngkyagu are concerned with their technological skills. In addition, it is a closed, endogamous role system which ensures that the necessary technological roles will be filled. There is an occupational continuity implicit in craft-castes which avoids the vagaries of individual motivation and life expectancy.

The caste system works, in effect, because the group provides needed specialists; but it persists because the specialists are socially distinctive and isolated. The ideology of the caste system translates an economic distinctiveness into a perceptual one. Lacking criteria of physical appearance, the differentia tend to be stereotypic characterizations through which one or the other of the caste groups is seen as being incomprehensibly different. But the mutual dependence characteristic of the system holds the two together in an organic solidarity which is symbolically manifest in the office of ptil and in the political organization of the ptilkur.

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We have seen that recent history has modified the institution of mafakur, and so, too, the Margi caste system is undergoing modification. The sources of these changes are primarily three: population growth, an improved transportation system, and conversions to Islam. The first of these was apparent in 1959-60 and will be discussed here; the greater impact of the second and the entire development of the third occurred between my first and second field trips and will be discussed in the final chapter.

Population increases in this general area understandably accelerated in the 1930's when the British pacified the countryside sufficiently to permit the mountainous pagans to move into the plains where they not only had access to more farm land but to the medical facilities provided by missionaries and the government. This trend was somewhat later among the Dzarr3u, local medical services not truly being generally available until the late 1940's. Simultaneously, implements of Euro-Asian manufacture were appearing at local markets. In addition, it was apparent that the demand for products of local manufacture could be accommodated by existing forges. Consequently, there was a surplus of technologists by 1959.

The consequence was far more than unemployment, for the caste system is predicated upon a balance of services between mbilim and ngkyagu and, as the caste began to lose its functions, it began to lose its meaning. The most noticeable effect in 1959-60 was that many ngkyagu had to farm in order to survive and many young ngkyagu were not learning the skills of their profession, Finally, resident ngkyagu in Gulagu reported that some of their sons had left the area entirely, but unlike other Margi adolescents who frequently spend periods in cities such as Maiduguri, the ngkyagu were not returning.

These events and those to be discussed later confirm an interpretation of the caste as a form of organization closely related to circumstances which are essentially archaic and which is therefore very vulnerable to changes in the social environment.

Chapter 7

Subsistence

(Sur feya mji)

The activities by which Margi subsist--what a Margi might refer to as sur faya mji, things which sustain people, do not constitute as distinct a folk category as, for example, ritual (zibsu), because they include a wide range of activities. Work, thlir, is a central concept, and most of the activities discussed in this chapter cluster about work. A common greeting abar thlir? (how is your work?) has the connotation of asking "how are you?" because work is so essential to survival. Work is not necessarily unpleasant and work in groups is often festive. If their life with its hard work and narrow margin of survival looks difficult, it is important to remember that traditionally they have known no alternative.

The division of activities by sex among the Margi is not complex. Both men and women are expected to farm to the limits of their ability, consistent with other obligations. Men do the heavier work such as clearing and carrying the heavier loads. If a woman should claim a piece of free bush land, she would be responsible for clearing it herself, though she might have one of her sons, a brother., or some similar consanguineal relative clear it for her. In principle, men and women are to share equally in the work, but differentials come into play. Women prepare food and therefore leave the fields earlier in the evening to prepare the late meal, and they may arrive in the fields later in the morning after taking care of household chores. Men consider the discussion of village affairs to be a legitimate part of their responsibilities and they sometimes can be found talking under a tree while their wives are in the fields. Neither sex considers this to be unfair unless a person whose counsel is unimportant should absent himself from his fields too frequently.

Women have charge of minor children although punishment is often left to the father. As mentioned above, they have the responsibility for preparing foods. Each woman is to prepare

food for herself and her children. She also has the responsibility for preparing her husband's food in rotation with other wives in the case of a polygynous marriage.

Insight into the division of most of the routine household skills practiced by all Margi can be gained through the standard terms of address applied to males and females. A man is mdurkyi, man of the compound, while a woman is malumbwa woman of the house; any work associated with the compound as a whole is a man's responsibility (even if he requires a wife's help), while his wife is responsible for much of a house's interior. Men build the walls of the compound, or the exterior walls of the houses, and the roofs. Women finish the interior of houses, make their utensils, and a myriad of small household items.

Margi subsist by farming, and with the exception of the ngkyagu, the caste of craft specialists, all Margi even though they may be engaged in more profitable enterprises, conceive of themselves as farmers. This blanket classification extends even to women,, who when they were first registered to vote in 1960 surprised the registrars by listing themselves as farmers--despite the fact that each is literally called housewife. But there is a subtlety here that was lost on the registrars, for in fact farming is not an occupation among Margi, it <u>is</u> Margi. In the traditional view, to be a Margi is to be a farmer (except for ngkyagu, discussed in Chapter 6). Even though a few may derive their greatest income from occupations such as teacher, trader, or governmental official, they still own farms which are worked by themselves and their families or occasionally wage labor. This is more than a practical money-saving measure, for cultivating farms is fundamental to their conceptions of themselves and their society. Farming seems to validate their identity as Margi.

Traditionally they have farmed the plateaus, sides of the mountains, and the valleys and plains adjacent to the mountains or the plains surrounding inselbergs. Since the first quarter of

this century, there has been an increasing tendency to farm farther into the plains and cultivation of the mountain slopes has markedly declined though it is still practiced. This change has occurred primarily because it has become safe to farm in the plains and it is recognized that mountain farming is less productive.

Mountain farms have low rock terrace walls rarely exceeding twelve inches in height, and wall construction and repair is little problem. Because there is always less weeding to be done on the terraces than in the farms in the plains, Margi view terrace farming with mixed emotions; it is invariably closer to their mountain homes and they say that it involves less work but the ease of terrace farming is more than offset by the greater productivity of the plains, a fact recognized by most Margi. Most terrace farmers today live so far back into the mountains or valleys that it is impracticable for them to farm in the plains. The later one comes to plains farming the farther out into the plains he must go since earlier farmers have taken the nearer land. By the 1970's land in the plains was becoming scarcer or hopelessly inaccessible and it was noted that a few farmers were reverting to terrace farming.

Whereas I have heard older men complain about the long journey to their fields out in the plains, I have heard their sons aver that they would move their homesteads into the lowlands when they became independent. The reluctance of the older generation to move their homesteads should be understood as a reluctance to break social and religious ties-leaving kinsmen, neighbors, and the local shrines--not as a reluctance to change from terrace farming to plains farming. As far as Margi are concerned, there is no particular merit associated with the older more traditional way of farming and plains farming does not require any techniques or knowledge not included in their traditional repertoire.

Land ownership among the Margi is a difficult topic since their concepts differ from those ordinarily associated with the idea of ownership and because rules regarding ownership, if not imprecise in theory, are imprecise in practice. This latter point is largely a consequence of the general availability of land in the plains and, therefore, issues which might become clear through dispute and adjudication are often lacking. It is also worth mentioning that Margi seem quite instrumental with regard to rules and interpret them to suit the occasion.

At first appearance Margi patterns of land ownership may seem to conform to Herskovits' generalization, "The form of land-ownership most widely encountered in agricultural Africa is one by which individual tenure, during use, derives from the allotment of land by the representative of the tribe or clan, who acts as trustee for the group as a whole" (1952:364). The emphasis upon use in this statement is not a simple matter for although Margi practice may seem to conform to the Criterion of Use it might be more accurately understood as the Criterion of Control. So long as a Margi can control the use of land he may regard it as his. Thus he may allow another to use his land; so long as he retains the nominal right to designate the user, he retains his right of ownership. For example, at Kaya, a growing hamlet of Gulagu, newcomers have found large tracts of land owned by one or two men. The land had not been used by its owners in some years and was thus vulnerable to being claimed. Instead, the owners each year go to Kaya and formally grant the immigrants permission to use the land at no cost and thus retain their ownership.

It is entirely appropriate for Margi to make a distinction between having a farm and having the land on which the farm is located. One owns a farm because it is the fruits of his labor or labor which is due him--as in the case of land farmed by dependents. On the other hand, most land is owned by virtue of membership in a fal and it is distributed through rules of inheritance.

Thus the farms at Kaya are owned by the immigrants while the land is still owned by the men of fal Gidam. Unclaimed lands are free to anyone who clears and farms them. Land so claimed becomes a part of the holdings of the claimant in no way different from his inherited lands., and it will be passed on to his heirs like any other fal-owned lands. Thus, individuals, even when acting as individuals are agents for their fal.

The second way the Margi deviate from Herskovits' generalization is more complex. As alluded to above, title to land resides in the fal. This is consonant with Herskovits' generalization, but unlike that statement, the Margi fal has no administrative representative. There are, for most fal, symbolic or ceremonial representatives but none of these has significant power over the actions of clan members. Nor is there any other representative in society who has power over land. Although occasionally persons will say that the ptil owns all land within his domain, these are pro forma statements analogous to saying that a Wisconsin farm belongs to the United States. This is not to deny that clan elders have considerable moral authority but to emphasize that they lack coercive power. The fal lacks the ability to take concerted and authoritative action.

This does not mean that the ultimate authority of the fal is denied; but since no one individual speaks for the collective interests of the fal, the individual proprietor of land has effective control of it within the fal. No individual may alienate land from his fal by sale or gift though he may loan it. Traditional courts apparently never dealt with land cases. In the first instance disputes about land were clan matters and therefore not within the normal jurisdiction of the courts, and secondly, land was so plentiful that alternate courses of action seem always to have been possible.

One land dispute has been taken to the modern court at Gulak. In that case a piece of land had been loaned more than twenty years ago to a local Fulani who had died, the land being used

by his heirs. The son of the original owner needed the land for one of his wives and laid claim to it. In the case testimony was received confirming that the land originally had belonged to the claimant's fal and had been farmed by his father. The court awarded the land to him. It is doubtless noteworthy that the claimant was the son of the original farmer and that no one acted for the fal in the case. Had the claimant been merely another clan member, it would have been interesting to know if the modern court would have upheld the claim, though unquestionably tradition would have supported such a claim.[1]

Normally, land passes from father to eldest son who apportions it to his brothers. If the land is "owned" by a woman (see below), it will pass to her own eldest son. In the case of men who by virtue of their wealth own much more land than their sons may use, other clan members, depending upon the closeness of the relationships, may inherit the land. However, should the sons be young, they may retain a prior claim to the land for a reasonable length of time.

If an owner does not need a piece of land and provided no other member of his fal wishes to use it, he may allow a non-clan member to farm it. For example, land owned by Mashim, who had inherited it from his oldest brother, was farmed by Mashim, two of the wives of a son of the original owner who farmed it on their own and not as a part of their husbands' farms, Siza, a member of another fal; and I farmed a small garden. None of us paid rent nor does rent seem to be a part of the Margi tradition, although Mashim knew that he could call upon us for support and be assured of cooperation. Were such support not forthcoming, he would undoubtedly deny us permission to use the land the next year. But no amount of use by any of us could change the ownership.

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[1] The relationship of individual rights to clan rights is very similar to the medieval concept of fee whereby a tenant had conditional rights in the land of his lord. In time the notion of fee has come to mean the full right of ownership.

There is one exception to the perpetuity of ownership even though its owner may wish to continue using it. This concerns the farm lands immediately surrounding a hamlet which, owing to their convenient location, are more valued than other farm land. Should a person move from his hamlet, he is entitled to farm the hamlet's land for only two years after which it can be claimed by another resident, preferably a clan-mate.

As in the case of the disputed ownership above, failure by an individual to farm his land makes it vulnerable to challenge. If this is the case in loaned land, it is even more so in the case of totally unused land. Under such circumstances undoubtedly ownership has changed from one fal to another. The following illustration approaches this condition though the transition is not completed.

When Kirngu was located atop Mount Gulak, the inhabitants' farmlands were located mainly on a plateau below the crest of the mountain and in the plains at the foot of the mountain. After Kirngu relocated, their new settlement was more convenient to their plains farmlands and made the acquisition of additional plains land easy. On the other hand, the plateau land was no longer of value to them and they gradually abandoned it. The hamlet of Humbili rises on a low rocky spine out of the plateau and its inhabitants did not move to the plain. For these people the plateau farmlands of Kirngu inhabitants were very desirable, and initially it was necessary for them to request permission from individuals to use these lands. It was essentially a one to one transaction for no member of Kirngu could speak for other members. In a short time the previous trustees of the land no longer referred to the land as theirs, and it is apparent that in time the land will no longer be claimed by any Kirngu resident and its title will have passed to the fal of the farmers of Humbili (some of whom are Gidam). Had the migration of the Kirngu farmers been farther, the transition of ownership would undoubtedly have been quicker. There are two

important points apparent in this example; first, that title can be transferred under condition of migration and succession, and second, that the actors in the transaction are the individual farmers although title is still invested in their fal.

The size of a farmer's holdings varies directly with the fertility of the soil, and as we noted previously, the soils near the mountains are more fertile than those farther out into the plains. Farms also vary with the size of the farmer's family and his general aspirations. The latter point was of little consequence among the Margi Dzirngu as recently as 1960, for they had not felt the full impact of western industrial consumer goods and consequently were still predominantly subsistence farmers. This was less the case for Margi Babal around Lassa who had become more acculturated and farmed with greater emphasis upon efficiency and maximizing productivity. At Lassa farms are very much larger than they are in Gulagu, both because the soil is less fertile and because it takes considerably more farming to produce a marketable surplus. By the 1970's only the most remote hamlets were not market oriented, especially as the drought made their crops all the more valuable in markets to the north. Many Margi sold sorghum and cowpeas in Maiduguri when they were sure they would have enough for the year. Some, however, sold too much and suffered shortages of their own.

Reliable figures on land holdings are very difficult to offer for Margi --particularly so for the Dzirngu where there is less emphasis upon productivity. The factors which complicate the issue include the extremely irregular shapes of farms, the amount of land not under cultivation, and finally, an attitude which equates farming with the amount produced rather than the amount of land cultivated. Thus a man farms however much he decides will produce enough for his family, allowing a margin for error in productivity and allowing for a modest over-production to

take care of unforeseen circumstances. The amount of land cultivated is then arrived at empirically without a great deal of thought given to the size of the farm under cultivation.

The traditional farmer approaches production in terms of his determination of his need and his knowledge of the yield typical of his plots. The data from several farmers in different circumstances suggest that they perceive their basic annual need for sorghum, the staple, at approximately 500 pounds per adult or adolescent and 250 pounds per child. This does not take into consideration any over-production as a margin of safety nor deliberate surplus production for profit. Consequently in 1960, the typical married household of husband, two wives, and four children or other dependents-one of whom was adolescent--would require approximately 2750 pounds of sorghum. In that year the government's agricultural officer estimated local yield at approximately 500 pounds per acre, though each farmer had a more intimate knowledge of the productivity of his own lands. If we allow a 10 per cent over-production as a safety margin, the typical family would have need for approximately six acres in cultivation devoted to sorghum. An additional acre would have been devoted to garden crops and groundnuts, the only cash crop generally grown.

The problems of farmers are accented by the variability of rainfall, which in most years would be anticipated in the over-production. In 1973 the rainfall was 40 per cent below normal and the problems were acute. This was at the height of the Saharian drought and so the shortage was not totally unexpected; however, the farmer's ability to compensate is limited both in terms of his land resources and in terms of the labor potential of his family. This is a topic to which we will return in the final chapter on changes in the Margi world.

The estimates above for farm size are based upon land in cultivation; a farmer's total land holdings will be much larger than this since fallowing is a necessary agricultural practice.

However, the relative abundance of land makes total land holdings even more difficult to estimate. There is one interesting and significant point about total land holdings. Whenever this topic is discussed, despite the obvious imprecision in estimates of gross area, it is apparent that the differences in total land holdings from one individual to another is less than the differences in land under cultivation. That is, among a group of farmers, the range of total land owned will be narrower than the range in the amount of land actually being used. This anomaly is partially explained by the ability of individuals to claim more land than they need because until the 1970's it was relatively plentiful. Thus an individual may claim as much as his neighbor, though his needs may be less and his actual cultivation smaller. There is another factor having to do with land and an individual's image of himself. Total land holdings tend to reflect an individual's view of himself--the land he will need "some day," whereas the land under cultivation is his empirical estimate of what he needs now. It should be stressed that the difference between the two is less a testimony to Margi pride than to very fluid social circumstances. For, in fact, the size of families do fluctuate as men become polygynous in their mid-years and monogamous again in their later years. Virtually every man expects this kind of growth in his family--though he is less convinced of a monogamous end--and his land holdings reflect this probability.

Women may own land in their own right by clearing free land in the bush, though it is more usual that they have usufructuary rights over land owned by their husbands, affines, or, more rarely, their own kinsmen. Although a woman's personal property is inherited by her daughters normally, land which she has will go to her sons. In this way the land which she has acquired is incorporated into the lands of her husband's clan. In at least one instance of which I know, a daughter successfully claimed the right to use her deceased father's land which was not being used by other heirs, but it was not clear to anyone how far her rights extended. Ownership

of the land was questionable, although it was agreed that the land had no other trustee. No one could say with confidence what would happen when she died, although it was generally supposed that the land would revert to her closest brother and I believe tradition would support that ruling. This was something of a special case, admittedly, since her father had been a very important man with more land than his sons could reasonably lay claim to at his death, but the incident demonstrates some of the imprecision and latitude in Margi land ownership practices.

Among the crops grown by farmers one finds sorghum (Sorghum vulgare), millet (Pennisetum), which Margi consider to be a form of sorghum, cowpeas (Vigna unguiculata), okra (Hibiscus esculentus), maize (Zea Mays), roselle and sorrel (Hisiscus Sabdariffa), Sesame (Sesamum indicum), ground nuts or peanuts (Arachis hypogaea), cassava (Manihot utilissima), Bambara ground nut (Voandzeia subterranea) and, in some places, rice (Oryza satira) and sugar cane (Saccharum officinarum). However, the principal crop of Margi is sorghum; it is principal in two senses. It is the most important food crop and it is the crop which is most important symbolically. It is, therefore, vital to both the subsistence and ritual systems of Margi. They recognize several kinds of sorghum; kuba, jerama, mamzizigu, zukwal, magaha, and irambuli, and jiga, which has three varieties, but some of these distinctions are of little significance. The most frequent division is into kuba and jerama, on one hand, and irambuli and jiga on the other. The first pair has a ritual importance which the second lacks.

Sorghum is planted in the fields, not in the gardens in the compound and in fact rarely in the fields nearest to an individual's compound. Fields vary in size with the smallest ones located closer to the village. Sorghum fields average about one acre, though a range of one-quarter to five acres existed at Kirngu.

The first sorghum planted is jiga which is planted without ceremony after the first rains in the second moon. It is also the first grain harvest and for this reason it is a favorite with many. Other sorghum is planted a little later in the second moon but still early in the rainy season. Irambuli, like jiga, is planted without ceremony, but the planting of kuba or jerama is accompanied by a certain amount of ritual. It is to be planted only by men, though this may be interpreted to mean that men must plant the first hills of these varieties. When kuba is planted, the head of the compound should carry to the field a small portion of iron ore (ifizawa), a few wild seeds known as milidu, some coarsely ground kuba, the jawbone of a goat which was sacrificed at the previous harvest, and a sprig of thorn. These are left in the field, preferably under a tree if there be one. The symbolic meaning and importance of the elements of the ritual are no longer known nor is the custom always observed. Some now say that it is only necessary when the first kuba is planted in a new field. The symbolism of one item is, however, recognized; the thorn which is carried around the plot is supposed to drive laziness from the field.

The sorghum seeds are planted several to a hill and generally planted in rows. The process is done in one operation: wielding the short handled hoe with one hand, dropping the seeds in with the other, and covering with a foot. Planting is done from early sun to sundown, with rests totaling about two hours. This amounts to approximately eleven hours of work. Sorghum planting on the average farm should be completed in about three days. Planting is not regarded as particularly hard work and does not normally require more labor than the members of the compound can provide. Exceptionally large farms may, however, utilize a cooperative enterprise, called mishki, for planting.

There are two kinds of mutual obligations involved with a mishki. There is first the responsibilities between affines, kin, neighbors, and friends, in that order. Secondly, there is a responsibility for the master of the mishki to compensate his helpers with sorghum beer and general festivity, though this responsibility is much more apparent in dealing with more remotely connected helpers. For example, one's sons-in-law owe labor but no such formal obligation exists among friends and acquaintances. Thus if one expects to attract the latter, he must provide beer.

The period following planting is often one of anxiety about rain. In general farmers are anxious to plant, but they are wary of the first rains which tend to be sporadic. For example, in one year the first rain in the Gulagu area fell on April 7; although this was an unmeasurable trace, it heightened the sense of expectation. The next rain, again only a trace, was nine days later, but the third rain, on April 25, was nearly a half inch. By this time there was much talk about farming and a general readiness to plant, but wiser heads cautioned against precipitous action, saying that before planting rains should come on successive or nearly successive days. There was no further rain for fifteen days, but then there were two successive heavy rains totaling 2.28 inches. There was a general rush to plant; both men and women literally hurried to their fields after the rain on May 10. However, in the next twenty days there were but two rains which totaled only SS inch. One could hear frequent expressions of concern about the lack of rain. Although Margi are prepared to accept the irregularities of early rains, they nevertheless sought explanations for the hiatus, and it was widely attributed to indignities which the Ptil Sukur had suffered at the hands of the civil authorities. When the rains finally resumed on May 29th, many feared that it was too late, a fear which proved unfounded. From that time, there was no further concern.

Although irrigation is not practiced, farmers try to compensate for the irregularity of early rains by planting their first jiga in fields which are near streams, springs, or in low spots. Such land is highly valued and the plots usually small. These fields are those with the greatest growth, and typically, they have to be weeded more often than others.

Earlier we noted that each farm is very likely to be subdivided into sections for each of a man's wives. This division is a matter of some embarrassment to Margi for it clashes both with their ideas of family life and the ethic of proper behavior. Ideally, a family is an integrated cooperative group. Furthermore, their ideal of proper behavior is one in which no individual asserts himself either in opposition to others or in such a way as to make himself stand out from his group. In practice we find that there is considerable and conspicuous rivalry and jealousy between the several branches of a polygynous household and few husbands have the power to do anything about this. It becomes necessary, therefore, for a man to divide each field so that each wife and her children will have an allotted section for which she can be held responsible. He must help each wife in turn. Men believe that this system is inefficient and they know that it is difficult for the head of the compound. They believe that it is inefficient because the slowest sub-unit inevitably sets the standard. This is compounded when other units use their free time to farm their own plots; their increased affluence creates envy among the slower, who argue for time and land to have their own farms. When the husband gives in, as he usually does, this may further slow down the family's productivity. A second factor which produces inefficiency is not recognized by men but seems apparent nonetheless. The demands wives make upon their mutual husband and the arguments over whether he is partial to one or the other seem to lead polygynous men to stay away from their fields more than others. Finally, the fact that men distribute their labor among several wives' plots may in itself lessen efficiency.

Weeding is the most onerous and boring of agricultural activities. Each field must be weeded a minimum of three times early in the growing cycle. After the sorghum is several feet tall little weeding is done unless another crop such as cow peas is to be planted between the hills. If weeding is left to the members of the compound, it will take from ten days to two weeks to do one weeding of the sorghum fields. However, frequently mishki are held to assist in weeding. These mishki usually attract one's kinsmen and neighbors only, for they require hard work and are not usually festive occasions.

There are two other activities to insure that the crops mature. The sorghum which is grown near villages must be protected from grazing sheep and goats. Young boys are usually given the task of herding these animals or generally keeping them under control. There is plenty of grazing area in the land which is fallowing, and the herds are not large. For most of the year the animals are free to roam, but from the time that the sorghum sprouts until it is too large to be endangered they must be watched. The second activity is associated with those farms closest to the mountains, especially if the area is underpopulated. Here baboons frequently make forays into the fields and cause great destruction. To protect against these raids, which usually come in the morning or evening hours, persons are stationed in the fields to frighten the baboons. Frequently, however, they are so aggressive that they must be driven away. This task is often done by older men who cannot work for long hours but who require the dignity associated with productive enterprise.

When the grain is ripened, some Margi perform a ceremony similar to the one reported at planting. They bend over either two or three stakes of sorghum and tie them. Beneath the sorghum they place some iron ore, wild grass seeds (milidu), coarsely ground kuba, the jaw bone of a goat and the heads of cut sorghum. This collection is referred to as a ngadlusu, the general

term applied to offerings to supernatural spirits. Again, this ceremony is sporadic in its observance and in general the harvest season is characterized by instrumental rather than expressive behavior.

The climax of the agricultural year occurs with the harvest, threshing and associated activities. This is a climax in several senses; it represents the fulfillment of the year's labors, it is a period of intense work, cutting the heads and carrying the grain from the distant fields; and finally, the social and religious rituals connected with this season are particularly festive and joyous. The timetable of events is as follows: jiga is harvested in the seventh and eighth moons and threshed in the ninth, irambuli is harvested in the eighth and ninth moons and threshed after the kuba and jerama are harvested in the tenth month. Kuba and jerama are threshed in the eleventh and twelfth months.

Although some sorghums may be threshed after they are harvested and dried, kuba and jerama, the bulk of the crop, cannot be threshed until after the Anggarawai ceremony in the eleventh month (late January through early February). This ceremony will be discussed in Chapter 9. The threshing of kuba and jerama is suffused with ritual which is an integral part of the activity from the perspective of traditional Margi. The grain is piled near the homestead to await threshing. Atop the mound are placed an orange colored thorn-gourd, a sprig of thorn from the Acacia albia, a sickle, a bunch of dried grass, and a small gourd receptacle. Thorns are often used to defend against evil, but the symbolic significance of the individual items is unknown. However, collectively they protect the grain from theft and the compound from future misfortune.

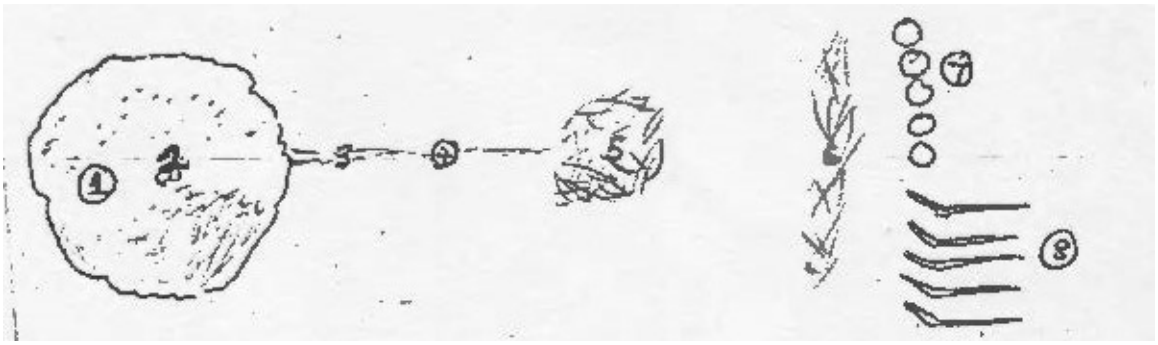
When it is permissible to thresh the grain, the owner will announce that he will hold a mishki and his wives will brew sufficient sorghum beer. A moderately prosperous man can

expect to have fifty or more persons attend his threshing. On the morning of the mishki the grain and ritual objects are transferred to a threshing floor. To the objects are added three heads of grain stuck upright into the pile, a small stick from the Ebony tree (Diospyros mespiliformis) in the shape of a threshing beater, and one stick from the Black Plum tree (Vitex cienkowskii or V. doniana) shaped like a hoe handle. If the owner's first child was male,, another stick of Black Plum will be added. Ideally, the principal workers at the mishki will be the sons-in-law or prospective sons-in-law of the owner, but young kinsmen and friends will also participate. Not all people who come to a mishki work. If they are old or if they are persons of high prestige, they will merely share in the festivities, though they all give advice and all might work should the need arise.

Once the sorghum is thoroughly threshed, the chaff is collected apart from the grain. The owner takes the grass from the ritual objects and dips it into a mixture of oil, red ochre, sheep dung, and okra leaves, and splashes it out onto the grain as he might have also done during the threshing at irregular intervals. He then takes the ritual objects in his hand and dances around the pile two or three times, using the miniature threshing stick he beats the pile two or three times, beats the bare threshing floor, and the work is finished except for arranging the pile as in Diagram 7-1. On the following day the grain will be carried to the compound and placed in the granary. A goat will be sacrificed, its blood caught in the gourd receptacle and poured over the granary, and the family will feast on the meat. The jaw bone of the goat is placed under or hung on the side of the granary.

Variation in the ritual elements of a threshing are considerable; for example, I have seen the dancing around the pile both before and after threshing. There is even some variation from

Diagram 7-1



1 Threshed grain
2. Threshing stick and ritual objects
3. Thin line of grain, sometimes called the mdurkyils penis
4. Mixture of oil, ochre, and sheep dung
5. Husks and some grain
6. Husks
7. Deer pots
8. Threshing sticks

year to year in the same individual's behavior. At one threshing the owner drank too much of his own beer and much to the delight of the crowd and with its encouragement he elaborated extravagantly and almost endlessly upon his role in the ritual. The amount of variation and the attitude toward it leads me to believe that individual elements of the ritual have little meaning to the participants though the whole performance is essential. It speaks to man's dependence upon other forces and acknowledges that the farmer's labor is but one part in a successful harvest. His kinsmen and neighbors for whom he has the mishki and, above all, Iju for whom he performs the rituals are his partners in survival.

Useful trees usually belong to the owner of the land, although it would be a breach of etiquette to refuse anyone from his hamlet the fruits of the tree if they exceeded his needs. Conversely, it would be a breach of etiquette to abuse such hospitality. A lime tree on a farm quite near Kirngu was used by everyone in the village without any need to ask permission of the

land's owner. When a boy picked virtually all of the limes to sell to me, he was severely reprimanded both for taking all of the fruit as well as for attempting to sell me fruit to which I had a reasonable right as a member of the hamlet. This was despite the fact that the boy was the son of the owner of the land. An important point regarding conceptions of use and consumption is revealed in this event; the principle of social unity is taken seriously and takes precedence--morally, if not legally--over property rights.

The livestock kept by traditional Margi is limited to chickens, goats, and sheep, though cattle are being increasingly held as repositories of wealth, as previously noted. Cattle remain ancillary to Margi culture with one exception. Old men can remember that in the mountains some families literally built houses around cattle and gorged them until some could no longer stand. Then at a festival they were ritually slaughtered and some of the meat preserved in potted form. The custom is apparently no longer practiced by Margi but was current at Sukur in 1960.

The produce that Margi Dzirngu farmers grow consists almost exclusively of subsistence crops. Even locally born agricultural agents have been unable to interest significant numbers of them in techniques which might improve production, such as the use of fertilizer,, or in farm production for a cash market. This is in marked contrast to some other Margi groups and some of the surrounding societies.

There are two minor exceptions to their resistance to cash cropping. Ground nuts have long been a source of cash and many men and particularly enterprising women have small plantings which they are able to sell to local agents. Finally, it was noted earlier that the severity of the drought provided opportunities of such magnitude that some farmers sold cow peas in the Maiduguri market. It is important to stress that in both these activities there was not an entry into a cash economy. Margi were not acquiring money which they would then use to buy the staples

of life. They were using a marginal portion of their time, energy, and resources to acquire what amounts to luxuries. This approach to the cash economy is in some ways similar to the role of the traditional market in Margi society, although markets are a very old tradition and completely integrated into their behavior.

Weekly markets are held throughout the surrounding area; in fact, the days of the week take their names from the settlements where markets are held.

Among the Margi Dzirngu major markets are held at Midlu (Tuesday), Gulak (Wednesday), Kircinga (Thursday), and Madagali (Friday). In addition there is a Sunday market in the Higi town of Michika just on the border of the Dzirngu area and a market on Mondays at Lassa just across the river among the Margi Babal. At Madagali, the former District Headquarters, some market activities are held on other days and in the 1970's Gulak added Saturday markets. Finally, minor markets are also held at other sites such as Dzu, which gives its name to Sunday and Kwopa which gives its name to Tuesday though it is a much smaller market than Midlu's. There is a tendency for the smaller markets to specialize in local products, e.g., the Kircinga market was noted for traditional cloth though the market has now grown much larger. Otherwise the range of products sold--and occasionally bought--at markets is quite broad and seasonally variable. As in other African markets, haggling is common. The range of prices is most variable early in the day before the pattern is set, and it is generally narrower for subsistence items.

In general, products and transactions can be divided into three types: foods, manufactured products, and services. About half the area is given to the sale of foods, many of them prepared but also including dried fish, fresh meat, and sorghum. The trade in the latter is small; just after harvest it includes mainly the sale of grain to brokers and before harvest it features the sale by

brokers to farmers who have been caught short. In 1959-60 one cow was butchered each Wednesday in Gulak; by the 1970's six or seven were butchered and one or two on Saturday. Although this presents a sizable increase in sale of beef, it must be viewed in the context of the fifteen to twenty thousand inhabitants served by the market: beef still is not a staple of the Margi diet. The second largest area of the market is given over to the sale of manufactured items. Some of these such as pots, hoes, and rope are of local manufacture, but the bulk are items of industrial manufacture such as cloth, used clothing, enamel ware, and a myriad of decorative materials used in costuming. Finally, in each market there is an area for services such as barbers, repairmen, and tailors.

In an area convenient to the market but distinct from it, there is usually a beer market or suku mpadlu. Although one can normally buy sorghum beer most any day, on market days special effort is made to prepare large quantities for sale. The beer market is held late in the afternoon after the other market has concluded. It is an occasion for visiting and conversing with friends and acquaintances and it frequently features dancing which may, when the moon is full, continue into the night. Although there is a great deal of gossip and good natured kidding about drunkenness and though there were a few notorious drinkers, in the l959-60 period I saw very little drunkenness at the beer markets I attended.

Women who brew beer for the market use their own grain and sell their beer--even to their own husbands. The money they receive is theirs and constitutes a major cash flow in the society. Some women are able to accumulate enough money to purchase cows and amass considerable wealth by local standards. One practice which is said to be a custom of women in particular is the purchase of unborn calves. Such sales are at lower prices, for the purchaser takes some of the risk regarding the sex of the animal and all of the risk should it die.

Virtually no traditional Margi depends upon the market either as a place to procure his subsistence or as an occupation from which he derives his livelihood, yet very many attend markets each week and make purchases. Thus, the market is peripheral to their subsistence--though it is probably more important than they realize. On the other hand, it is important as the principal place of general social exchange. The market is virtually the only place where one meets with a broad range of the society's members on a regular basis.

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The subsistence system of any society reflects the interaction of environmental resources and human energy and technology. The most predictable change is likely to occur in a society's technology. A shortage of land will inevitably lead to the introduction of new farming techniques including those which will foster entry into a cash, truly market economy. As we shall describe in Chapter 10, improved highways and other forms of communications have made Margi more accessible and susceptible to consumer products which can only be obtained with cash, thereby increasing the pressure upon them to enter the market economy.

The changes which can be foreseen are not very different from those which have occurred and are occurring in countless other African societies. There is no reason to believe that the effects will be less revolutionary. It is not possible to change from a system based upon familial self-sufficiency to one which relies upon regional, national, and international interdependence without dramatically changing the society.

Chapter 8

Political Organization

(Ptilkur)

With the introduction of dynastic traditions into the Dzirngu area noted in Chapter 1, multi-hamlet social units called ptilkur emerged. Each was presided over by an hereditary leader called a ptil. This term is still used, though in the contemporary period it does not always designate a leader out of a dynastic tradition, being applied to some appointed leaders as well. The only pre-dynastic officers of which we know were the zuli or priests who tended the shrines of local yal. It is very likely that their domains were restricted to local clan-communities and any immigrants thereto. We do not know the extent to which there were secular powers in the office of zuli, though it seems probable that it may have exerted a familial and proprietary influence over clan members as well as others who felt the relevance of the local yal in its care. Whatever may have been the case, the office has persisted with only ritual responsibilities.

The local secular authority is the bulama, an office which was apparently created only after the advent of the ptilkur. This inference is based upon the fact that the office is invariably junior (in history) to that of the zuli where the two exist in the same hamlet and the fact that the bulama is not an independent office but administratively tied to the dynastic leader-

Today, not all hamlets have zuli since some are so depleted that the zuli have emigrated and some are so new that no yal is associated with them. But all hamlets have bulama who are responsible for administration. The power of the bulama is relatively weak and is ultimately derived from his association with the ptil. Formerly, he implemented the orders of the ptil; organized public work forces, including labor owed the ptil; arbitrated disputes, settling those he could and referring others to the traditional court; collected taxes, fines, and tribute; dispensed largess, usually from the ptil but occasionally from himself; coordinated the hamlet's activities in annual public rituals, and performed a few rituals not the responsibility of the zuli, such as an annual sacrifice of goats along the paths leading to the hamlet. Today his only formal duty is the

collection of taxes, which is much more complex than it formerly was and in which there are a great many mistakes. He still may settle petty disputes and organize public works, but his authority to do so is consensual and non-enforceable.

The office of bulama is invested in a single descent line, although the authority of the office is delegated by the ptil who must install the bulama and to whom the bulama is and must be beholden. Thus in a practical sense the office is appointive, for it operates as though it were. The consequences of this are very notable for the people of a hamlet, for the bulama is less their man than the ptil's; he is not their representative to the ptil but rather the ptil's representative among them. Such powers as the bulama has are not derived from the people and he is not, therefore, subject to recall. On the other hand, the bulama is very much a man in the middle, subject to the complaints in his hamlet--sometimes for decisions and practices not his own, yet charged with the administration of affairs in the unit and subject to dismissal or censure if the hamlet is not harmonious. His rewards are the prestige of the office-and Margi are very mindful of such status differentials-payment in cash and kind from the ptil, and an occasional local payment for favors received.

There has been a delicate balance always apparent in this position. A successful ptilkur depended upon successful administration of its hamlets, yet if a bulama were too successful he might be able to build his position into one challenging the ptil. Such splits seem to have been relatively rare, although some remote hamlets might be poorly integrated into a ptilkur, some subject to claim by two or more ptilkur, and occasionally they were ignored and permitted to drift into a semi-independence. Wano, a hamlet in Gulagu, once showed signs of segmentation. It is a remote hamlet and was once so populous that it had several sections, each with its own bulama. Unlike other giwa, it has a distinctive history and its principal bulama was addressed as

Ptil Wano, although Ptil Gulagu expressed displeasure at the custom. In the first quarter of this century, its population was decimated by Hamman Yaji; and today it is only a dependent hamlet, but so dispersed that it has two bulamas.

British administration and the pacification it brought profoundly affected the structure of traditional power, and the office of bulama has changed radically. In the first instance increased spatial mobility not only gives an impermanence to hamlets but to their bulama, and a new bulama or the bulama of a small or diminishing hamlet will inevitably be weak. Furthermore, as Margi move from one hamlet to the next, they are less awed by their bulama. As the accessibility of formal courts has become known, the counsel of a bulama is less often sought. Finally, the enforced centralization of administration by regional and national governments has emasculated the bulamas position and none is recognized as an official by the central government.

Since hamlets and bulama are not recognized by the nontraditional authorities as legal entities, they exist only as administrative conveniences of the local "village heads" (the formal designation of ptil). To be sure the force of tradition and the remoteness of these regional and national authorities ensures that the bulama have not disappeared, but they recognize that their power is eroding and their actions are tentative and weak. One final change is to be noted, more for what it portends than any immediately foreseeable consequence. There is at least one hamlet in which the office of bulama has become elective. Giwa Mission, the hamlet in which both the Church of the Brethren Mission and the elementary school are located, successfully petitioned Ptil Gulagu to make the office of bulama an elective one (there is no zuli there). The winner is still installed by Ptil and apparently still operates as Ptil's representative, although he owes his position to the electorate.

In pre-colonial times the boundaries of a ptilkur were imprecise and variable from one regime to another. Consequently, it is perhaps most accurate to think of a ptilkur as a sphere of influence rather than a geographically bounded territory. At times a peripheral hamlet may have been bound to one ptilkur only to be tied to another at some other date, and peripheral bushlands were likely to be unclaimed until they were actually farmed. (Today, with the formalization implicit in written records, boundaries are more distinct though changes still occur.) Often, the secular-authority of a ptil in a given hamlet is inversely proportional to its distance from the royal hamlet. Thus as one travels across the countryside, he finds that he moves almost imperceptibly from one ptilkur to another. There are some exceptions to this rule worthy of note. In the mountains,, where the population density is higher, the establishments older, and traditions firmer, the boundaries are more stable and allegiance more unwavering. Furthermore, there are some places which by special traditions are firmly committed to one ptilkur or another. in the case of a pool in the river Yedseram at Yinagu, the fishing rights are divided with the southern portion belonging to Ptil Gulagu, the northern portion to the Margi of Mulgwi in Borno, and the central portion divided between Ptil Hymbula, in whose ptilkur the pool is located and who is known as "master of the pool," and the Fulani head of the town of Madagali. Ptil Gulagu has also said that all crocodiles in the pool belong to him and says this claim has been upheld at least once by a District Officer.

The ptilkur is the maximum and ultimate political unit. Prior to the colonial period there was no mechanism for settling disputes between ptilkur nor between citizens of different ptilkur short of coercive force. At that time each ptil had his own court. Although residents of different ptilkur could and did interact at markets, during travel, and most notably through marriage arrangements, the relations between ptilkur, as such, were potentially hostile. Attacks upon

strangers and travelers were common, and as recently as 1959-60 some Margi were uneasy when traveling in a strange ptilkur. The carrying of spears and other weapons is more than a romantic custom. Open warfare was not infrequent and will be discussed below. There is no indication that ptilkur ever formed alliances to fight a common foe except for some poorly coordinated and largely unsuccessful opposition by Gulagu and Dluku--who are of the same dynastic family-against Hamman Yaji in this century. The pride of autonomy felt by a ptilkur permits no dependency; a traditional ptilkur is a world unto itself which only begrudgingly admits to the existence of others. The ptil is both the chief officer and the center of ritual life in the ptilkur. The merging of these two roles makes a purely political discussion of the office difficult. Discussions of the secular power of a ptil is, to be sure, a relevant way of talking about his influence. A ptil had power of taxation and in the past had coercive powers at his hand for exacting allegiance. The royal princes (maina) were his "police" and capable of enforcing individual decisions through confiscation, corporal punishment, or--more likely--threat.[1]

In a general sense, the power of a ptilkur was demonstrated through warfare which was an honored pastime of ptilkur such as Gulagu. Their raids on towns such as Yaza (Barth, II:400) provided spoils and reminded all of the power of their ptil. It may also be pointed out that Margi culture places high value upon strength and winning, and inhabitants of hamlets are proud to be associated with strong ptilkur.

Wars--perhaps raids is a more descriptive word--were often conducted at predictable times of the year for predictable ends. It is said that around the time of Yawal, the great summer feast of fertility and virility, a ptil would most often send his warriors to raid a distant kingdom. When my informants spoke of these occasions, it was with the enthusiasm of speaking of sport.

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[1] The diary entry for August 8, 1960, reports a Maina bringing in a prisoner, though at that date his legal authority was doubtful.

Doubtless the execution was not always so enjoyable, but from all evidence losses were probably not great, and many raids merely forced their adversaries to flee their villages without any loss. Besides the prestige to be gained in such forays, there was the hope of captives for wives or ransom as well as the booty from deserted compounds.

In addition to ordering the raid, the ptil would consult a diviner and make sacrifices for the success of the mission, but he was forbidden to participate in the fighting. The office of midela was the traditional general of the kingdom's forces, though it would seem that some raids of a more personal nature were carried out without him. Battles were usually brief with surprise being a major part of their strategy. Spoils were divided among the warriors, who were supposed to represent a kingdom's many hamlets and at least included bulama from these hamlets. Specified portions of the spoils were reserved for the ptil, the midela, and the royal hamlet. The spear and shield were the principal weapons. The Margi "throwing knife" (Barth l857, II:390 and 532; Lagercrantz 1950:204-5) was not used nor was it ever thrown, being more properly a hand weapon for personal defense or, today, a symbol of traditional status.

It is unquestionably true that no ptil either now or in the past truly had sufficient force to subjugate all the hamlets of his ptilkur, and the disparate traditions and histories of clans constitute an insubstantial basis for a unified political organization. Furthermore, in no history is there the slightest hint that the dynastic tradition was spread by conquest. The only history of conquest is in the conflict between different dynasties. Time and again the coming of the larger political order is characterized similarly to that previously recounted for the elevation of the Gidam at Gulagu; to wit, a populace is so awed by the supernatural powers of the proto-ptil that they ask him to be their ruler.

Much of a ptil's power is based on his position as chief priest of the ptilkur. Even today, the attitude of pagan Margi is not significantly different from that expressed in founding legends; he is an awe-inspiring person with mystical powers. They say that Ptil Yarkur of Gulagu has done marvelous things, although he makes no such claim. And indignities suffered by the ptil of Sukur were said to have caused a dangerous hiatus in the rains of 1960 (Supra, p. 184). As a sacerdotal leader, the ptil is the center of all calendrical feasts, and his association with such sacred events sanctions his secular power, not only in legend but in fact. The mystical powers of a ptil become the cohesive force of the political union in the ptilkur. People are united in their belief in the ritual powers of a particular ptil and in their conviction of the religious relevance which he has for them and their lands. It is not that they worship him in the usual meaning of that term, but their allegiance to him has a more mystical basis than is usually implied by that term. To a large extent one obeys the man because he is the ptil, protected by supernatural forces and capable of using these forces to enforce his right. To offend him is to offend the order of things, to commit a crime against him beyond comprehension and beyond legal punishment.

The rationale for the power and mystery surrounding and supporting a ptil lies in the Margi conception of nature and the relationship of man to nature. Though Margi maintain themselves by virtue of their technology and diligence, they feel, nonetheless, vulnerable should the forces of nature be unfavorable. The all-powerful leader satisfies their need for control over their destiny. The awesome responsibility of placating the supernaturals is balanced by the marvelous powers of the ptil who thus becomes a force affecting life in the ptilkur. The ptil is more than the chief priest of the ptilkur, for by virtue of his mystical powers he becomes one with the ptilkur. As the embodiment of his ptilkur, he is a "divine king" within the time honored usage of that term (cf. Vaughan 1980).

The Margi ptil is his ptilkur; or as Ptil Yarkur once phrased it, "Talaka jungu ptil," (commoners + copula + king) which translates best as, "It is the people who are king." The fertility, strength, and prosperity of ptil and ptilkur are equated. It is important to recognize that to Margi this is more than symbolic representation; it is an identity which has everything to do with life in all its aspects. For example, if we accept that survival, the adaptation of man to environment, is the first prerequisite of society, the identity of ptil and the world is profoundly economic. A sick ptil portends a bad harvest, or a sick economy reveals an inadequate ptil. Although it is difficult to see how the ptil has substantial input into the economic order apart from insuring the peacefulness of markets, the identity of ptil and ptilkur means that the harmonious maintenance of the economy is a primary responsibility of the political order. This is achieved with little or no active management of the economy, or with little thought of the relationship of the two.

When one asks the common people of Gulagu to describe conditions that would indicate the failings of a ptil-and thus justify his removal--the illustrations are of failing rains and crops, famine, epidemics, and the like. Even more convincing is the congruence of two customs. At the major ritual of the year, the festival of fertility, called Yawal at Gulak but with other names in other ptilkur, the ptil goes to the edge of a cliff and throws a lighted torch into the night: the throw and the length of time the torch burns is symbolic of the coming harvest. But it is also prophetic of the ptil's own next year. The inhabitants of Gulagu remember that when Ptil Simnda did this in l9S3 the torch was quickly extinguished, and shortly thereafter he was dead. The second custom concerns the time at which Margi say that they overthrow impotent ptil; it was during Yawal, the fertility festival.

All activities of public concern are mystically related to the ptil. His ritual identity is multi-purpose and he is therefore all the more powerful. It would be a rash person who would risk offending such a person, but a wise ptil will not risk his credibility by capricious threats and injunctions. Thus, the system remains balanced; a believing, trusting, supportive populace and a trustworthy, powerful, but ultimately vulnerable ptil.

The ultimate vulnerability of the ptil is a consequence of the rationale supporting the divine king. If the ptil is weak, sick, foolish, etc., lie jeopardizes the ptilkur and he must be removed for its survival. Similarly, if conditions in the ptilkur are bad, the ptil can be blamed. The supreme powers of the ptil require that he be "perfect." An imperfect ptil, however implied, is unthinkable; as noted by Young, the individual is removed to preserve the symbol (1966:lSl).

For the Margi Dzirngu, removal means regicide. As in other instances of their conception of the office of ptil, there is little conscious rationale here. Although they recognize that the awesome power of ptil is not present in an individual until he is invested in office, there is no way of divesting him of the power short of death. In practice it is difficult to guarantee that a ptil will be killed since it is unlikely that he will acquiesce in his own death. He may, with his most faithful followers, fight and thwart the attempt, or he may flee the ptilkur. In the latter case, the ever-practical Margi simply proceed as though he were dead, for the world of a ptil is his ptilkur. (In fact, there is an old tradition that no ptil could leave his ptilkur, though this has long been untenable with the demands of modern government.) However, a ptil who has only been chased from his ptilkur is a potential threat to try to regain power.

This discussion of removal has obviously shifted from an ideological rejection of a ptil to a discussion of coup d'état and counter coup, for events between reveal that ideology was secondary to rivalry and greed. The potential omens of misfortune are more often conveniently

remembered when things have gone bad, but few are eager to interpret misfortune in this way unless it be very dire. More often than not, there has been an ambitious prince waiting for the incumbent to make a mistake, an individual who listens to the gossip in the markets to gauge the popularity of the ptil, and finally makes his move. That move, called thlida, is not a revolution and never seems to have involved either a prolonged struggle or a broadly based one. The commoners are only interested spectators. Conditions inevitably would be such that they would not be surprised by the move, but they regarded the outcome of the thlida to be the ultimate test of their feelings of unease. If the incumbent won, clearly he was still strong and vigorous; if he lost, their disquietude was justified and they would now be delivered by the new ptil.

The change of ptil, although of fundamental importance for re-establishing the ritual relationship between Margi and the forces which surround them, never results in a significant change in the secular power relations of the ptilkur. In the first instance the rules of succession are such that the new ptil will be a close relative of the old, for only the eldest son of a deceased ptil may succeed to the office. This rule is not quite so lineal as it might at first seem, for whenever a ptil dies both his eldest son and his next brother are eligible, each being the eldest son of a deceased ptil. Furthermore, each time the office moves collaterally the possibility of multiple heirs increases.

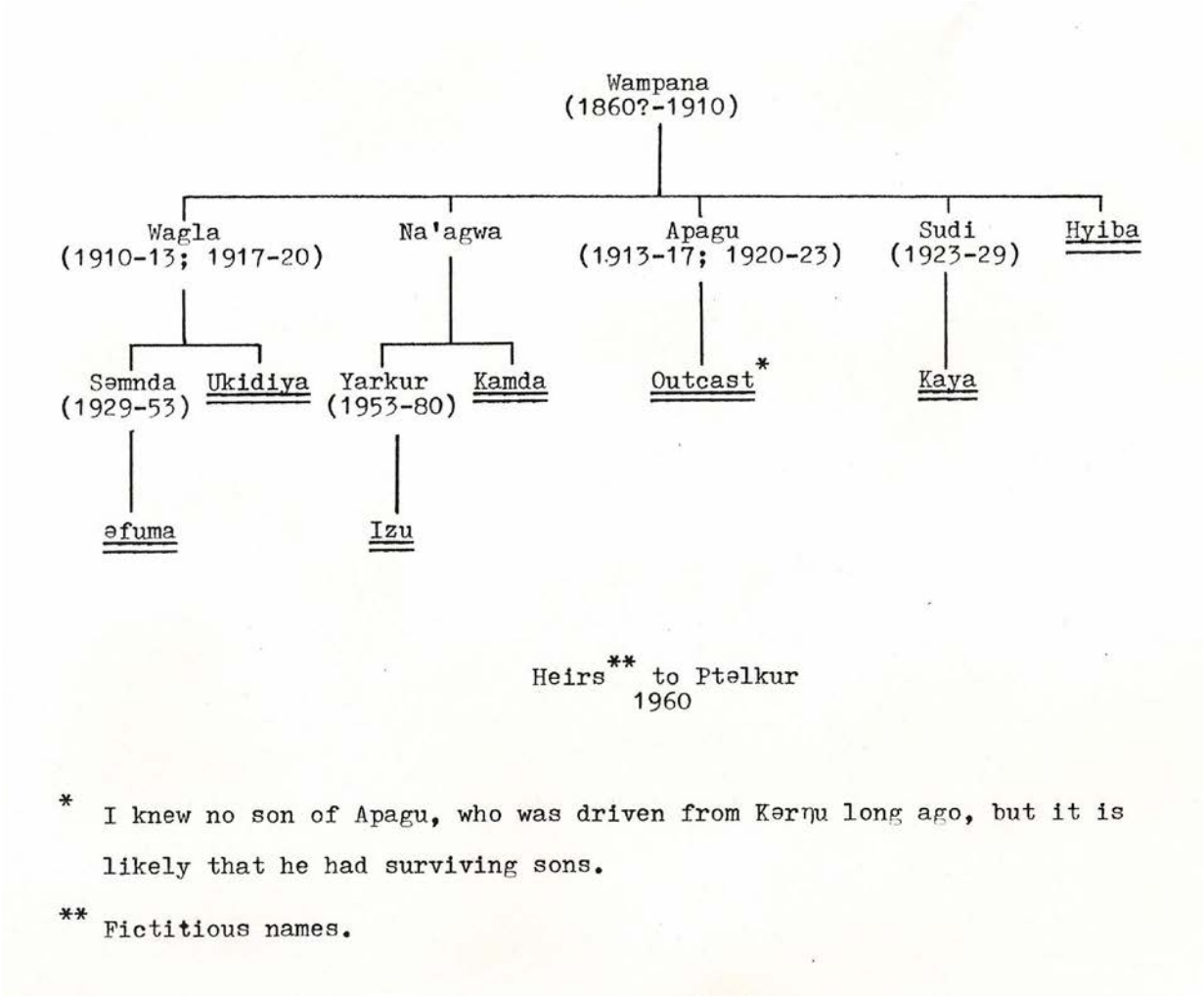
The situation may be further complicated in practice when for local reasons it may be decided that an individual "ought" to be ptil as when the succession passed to Yarkur, whose father had never been ptil (pp. 67-68). It was reasoned that Yarkur was eligible for the office on the grounds that his father would have been ptil had he not been killed defending Ptil Wagla (p. 65).

Such situations give rise to numerous potential heirs to the office. Diagram 8-1 shows all of those eligible to the office in the early 1960's. There were six (or seven if a son of Apagu appeared) potential leaders of a thlida. Yet, while emphasizing the fact that the political climate at all times is potentially explosive, this is nonetheless an overstatement, for in most situations there has been only one or two relevant aspirants. The first is the designate of the incumbent ptil, who presumably is loyal to him, and the second is that pretender who is best able to organize a viable thlida. In the diagram the designated successor was Ukidiya, the makarama and the challenger was Ufuma; no others were relevant. In time, however, Izu might replace Ukidiya as Yarkur's choice or either of them could make a move against the latter. The fearlessness and skill necessary to undertake and organize the thlida virtually insures that the ptil will be a strong and able person, for even if the office passes to the ptil's designate he will in all probability sooner or later have to weather a thlida and perhaps lead one on his own.

Despite the complications involved in such shifts and intrigues, the fact remains that the power was still contained within a relatively small family. The only noticeable difference the general populace might feel would come from possible excesses of greed or beneficence that an individual ptil might show. In practice, however, these have tended not to be important factors. Even when the hated Hamman Yaji on one occasion succeeded in supporting Apagu in his thlida, it seems to have made little difference. Such alliances were more in the order of dyadic contracts affecting only the principals and it was also more likely that Apagu was using Hamman Yaji to effect his own ends than he was being used himself.

Care must be taken in discussing the dynamics of succession wherein such a sordid account of fratricide is related, for we must not ignore the ideology of the divine kingship. The lack of participation of the populace in the thlida helped them maintain their beliefs in the

Diagram 8-1



sanctity of the office of ptil. But even within the royal hamlet where these intrigues took place and still take place, there is an aura of mystery which surrounds the ptil. Despite a challenger's enmity toward a given ptil he still knows that he is the ptil with all that the office implies. There is an awareness, if only subliminally, of the distinction between an individual and the office. In the royal hamlet they remember that before Yarkur was ptil he was a heavy drinker and had a fierce temper, though he is literally the model of proper behavior today. Yet they see this transformation as being wrought by the office and not by the man. Furthermore, as his daily associates, they are aware of his petty failings, his pride, his fears, his domestic difficulties. To

those who reside in the royal hamlet more than any others, the symbolism of the office is apparent. They know his weaknesses, and knowing them they must save the symbol. The ideology of the divine kingship is, then, self sustaining like other ideologies. It is full of self-fulfilling prophecy; mysterious powers are ascribed to a ptil, and as he acts in accordance with this ascription, it is noted that he is different from other men. Because he is unlike other men, power is given to him; the more power he has the more he is different. The belief justifies the power and the power reinforces the belief.

The origin of the mystical powers of an individual who becomes ptil is the installation ceremony. The ptil-designate is acknowledged by the chief commoner of the ptilkur, an office called thlifu, who ceremonially salutes him to indicate his choice. The nominee dresses only in the traditional ram skin loin garment, the pizhi, and has a woven cotton strip tied around his waist by the Ngwoma, the royal master of ceremonies. A mat shelter is built for him in the square in the center of Kirngu in which he will reside for the next two or three days--two if his first born child was female and three if it is male. During this seclusion he will be attended by his kwakyim, a slightly older woman who as a girl was his attendant during his initiation into manhood.

The kwakyim cooks for the new ptil, as she did during his initiation. He eats no meat during this time., and no one is permitted to see him eat. It is generally considered bad manners to watch another eat, but a ptil must never be viewed eating except on one ritual occasion (p. 251). (The kwakyim and later the wife who cooks for him and serves him are exceptions to this injunction.) So serious is this prohibition against seeing the ptil eat, that the legend of the change in the clan of the ptil of Mazhinyi hinges on this point. A maternal nephew of the Ishidi ptil of Mazhinyi had him drink gruel in which he had placed a chicken part. When the assembled

persons saw the ptil with a piece of chicken in his mouth, he was driven away and the office subsequently passed to the nephew who was Icogwa. There is no rationale today for the taboo against seeing a ptil eat; it may be nothing more than an elaboration upon traditional decorum or it may be a symbolic denial that a ptil must eat as others do. In any event the custom like so many of the others serves to make the ptil distinctive.

During the ptil's stay in the mat shelter he takes no weapon with him although he does take his shield of buffalo hide. Ptil are never supposed to fight, not even to lead warriors in war. As living symbols of the harmony desired by all men, they even eschew displays of temper. This prohibition apparently comes hard to some ptil for aggressiveness and ability in combat are cardinal Margi masculine values and they have frequently been the avenues by which individuals have risen to the office of ptil. Once, despite the injunction against a ptil's taking up weapons, Ptil Yarkur put on a magnificent demonstration of the soldierly arts for the young men of the Gidam clan. The shield is a classic symbol of manhood. Every initiate carries around his father's shield and attains one himself as soon after his initiation as he can. On ceremonial occasions the ptil will display his shield and when he dies a shield will be split and placed around his body.

On the first day of the seclusion the ngkyagu come from Sukur, the ancient home of the Gidam clan. These are the lineal descendants of the ngkyagu who provided the wife of Sakun, the founder of the Sukur dynasty (pp. 53-55). They bring their distinctive musical instruments and during the days of seclusion they sing and dance around the ptil-designate's shelter. Each day they are rewarded with a sheep and other food.

When the designate finally emerges from the shelter, he is greeted by all the princes who lead him to a large rock in the pathla where he is seated facing the thlifu. He is then surrounded by the shields of the princes, and the chief ngkyagu from Sukur shaves his head leaving the

traditional royal hair-lock. This lock is a symbol of his office but a symbol which is seen only once a year (Chapter 9). When he dies, it is cut off and the hair placed in a leather bag with the hair of other ptil of Gulagu. The ngkyagu prays as he shaves the new ptil, "Iju has given this great title, let him no longer know hunger nor eat spoiled things again."

The Birma, a mafa especially chosen to be the royal mafa and representative of all mafa, then slays a cow at the entrance to the royal compound. The new ptil and his first wife (his mala mba) steps across the cow and into the compound. As he enters he prays, "This is the home of my ancestors; let me live in it in peace and with wisdom." The sacrificed cow is then divided into four parts; one is given to the Sukur ngkyagu who take it with other gifts to Thilidi (King) Sukur; a second is given to the makarama, the ptil's administrative assistant, who shares it with the maina; the third is given to Thlifu (the chief commoner) who distributes it to the commoners or to their ceremonial representatives; a portion is given to the birma who retains it for the new ptil; and the head is given to the local ngkyagu. The representation of makarama for royalty, thlifu for commoners and Birma for ptil, is a common one in Margi ritual.

Inside the royal compound the Ngwoma removes the kabaka cloth from ptil's waist and sacrifices a ram before ptil's own house, across which the new ptil must step as he enters his house. Finally, the local ptil ngkyagu sacrifices a cock, putting its blood on the door and around the house. The installation is complete. On the following day there will be great feasting and dancing in the pathla and all the bulama and many others will come to salute the new ptil.
It is worthy of mention that the role of the kwakyim, the use of the shield, and the seclusion, are all reminiscent of the boys' initiation ceremony, and like that ceremony, this, too, is a rite of passage. For when it is completed the individual who becomes ptil will be an altogether different

person. The ceremony of installation, like that of initiation (Vaughan 1962:49), is expected to produce a visible and tangible change as well as a symbolic one.

The ptil's compound is what one would expect of the wealthiest Margi in the ptilkur, which he is very likely to be. It is large with many houses, granaries, and livestock stables (goats, sheep, chicken, a horse, but no cattle). It is populated not only with his wives and children, but dependent relatives, servants, and the occasional visitor. At one census time in 1960, Ptil Yarkur's compound had 23 inhabitants; the ptil, seven wives (two others were away), twelve minor children (seven others had moved out on their own), two sons of his brother, and the daughter of one of his wives' brother.

There are features of life in the ptil's compound which are distinctive to it. His personal house must be large enough for him to eat regularly within it, and he must have a pit latrine, since eating and eliminating are acts too personal to be viewed by others. The wife who does his cooking has a larger house to store his food and to reflect her special position. This position, which lacks a special title, is much prized among women, even though in former times she was put to death at the time of ptil's death. (Today a dog is substituted.) When a man becomes ptil, there is competition among his wives for the honor of cooking for him--and the accompanying advantage of sharing his food, though never of eating with him. It is said that at times the wives have cooked competitively offering their foods to the people of the village or to ptil's advisors. The woman chosen does no farming herself as well as enjoying the prestige of the position.

The senior wife has the highest prestige of any woman in the ptilkur. She bears the title Thladawa. If the ptil's mala mba is divorced or deceased, he will mba with another virgin and she will accede to the title, for this woman must embody the Margi ideal of premarital chastity and wifely fidelity. At the Anggarawai harvest ceremony she is a central figure walking from the

fields to the compound of ptil. If the Thladawa became malabjagu and moved from the ptil's compound, she would be succeeded by his next senior wife. One of the most unusual features of ptil's family is that one of his wives--one whom he marries after his installation--is a member of the ngkyagu caste. Margi, as noted in Chapter 6, universally regard ngkyagu with wonder; they are ascriptively people of mystery and power and set apart in custom and ideology. No Margi would think of eating with one much less marrying an ngkyagu. This apparent violation of what is otherwise a rigidly enforced separation of social groups is an institutional feature of the Gidam dynasties at Gulagu, Dluku, and Sukur and is explained in terms of the founding legend of the Sukur dynasty already recounted. The custom is not widely known; in fact, a son of Ptil Simnda had not been aware that his father had had an ngkyagu for a wife. When Ptil Yarkur married an ngkyagu, many of the younger inhabitants were shocked and privately some made jokes about ptil having an ngkyagu for sulku (in-laws).

We have noted that there are associations between the ptil and ngkyagu: they are the official installers, or as they say they "make" the ptil, upon his death he will be buried as though he were an ngkyagu, seated on a stool made of iron and surrounded by charcoal. Although the ptil does not farm for other ritual reasons, it is still characteristically commented upon by comparing him with the ngkyagu who also do not farm. The explanation of these relationships is phrased in terms of the founding legend. However, a more functional and consistent explanation lies in the nature of the ptil-ship. We earlier stressed that the ptil is the ptilkur, he is also its people including the ngkyagu. Thus the peculiar associations with the ngkyagu may serve the multiple functions of acting out a legend, making the office even more unusual and mysterious, and finally it represents the ultimate in identification of ptil with ptilkur.

The prohibition against a ptil farming extends even to the belief that should he walk among the crops there will be a disaster. The custom serves as a rationale for the bulama of near hamlets organizing work groups to assist ptil's wives and dependents in working his fields. Such cooperative work groups are particularly festive occasions, with a great deal of drinking, feasting and conviviality. The occasion, therefore, is not unpleasant and the activity brings the various hamlets into closer contact with the office of ptil and gives them a proprietary interest in the ptil-ship and life in the royal village. It is also an opportunity for the ptil to dispense largess and thus solidify relations. There is even a certain amount of competitiveness in providing good work forces and in making the occasions truly festive.

There are certain paraphernalia associated with the office of ptil. The most important item is his mbari, the royal verge, which he carries with him on all official occasions and at any time he travels or wishes to appear formal. It is said that ptil may kill someone if he deliberately touches that person with his mbari. However, this is a power of the ptil through the mbari, not a power permanently residing in the mbari, for with his permission one may pick up and examine the staff without harm. The instrumentality of view which seems so characteristic of Margi extends even to this most awe-inspiring of items, for when the staff becomes old and desiccated it is routinely replaced and the old one destroyed. The next most important possession of ptil is a cape made from the skins of hyraxes, the animal which the ptilkur's founder hunted and generously shared with the original inhabitants. The cape, which is worn at Yawal, recalls those legendary beginnings of the state, and more than any other material item it visibly establishes the continuity between ptil and his predecessors.

Other appurtenances of the office are less important. The leather bag containing the hair of previous ptil has no particular use or power associated with it. Beneath his granary, ptil keeps

three other relics of unknown age and imprecise historical tradition: a rhinoceros horn and two stones. The rhinoceros horn has special properties; if a few of its fibers are cooked, a ptil's depleted coffer will be filled, as, for example, fighting may break out in front of his compound and he may assess fines against offenders. (Rhinoceros have not been reported in the Margi area for many years, although many other rare animals are still occasionally encountered, including elephants and leopards.) One of the two stones is small, oblong, flat, polished, and appears to be a very much used grinding stone; the second is much like the former, except that it is slightly broken and has two hemispheric protuberances neatly centered on one side. The first stone is regarded as being male and the second female. No remembered function is associated with the stones. All three of these relics are anointed with the blood of a sacrificial goat mixed with goat dung at the harvest ceremony. The ptil and the bulamas from hamlets, as the responsible officers of the ptilkur, constitute virtually the total administrative machinery of Margi political organization. The power to implement public policy is very nearly encompassed in these two classes of officials, though the power of establishing policy is centered in the office of ptil. To be sure the government of a ptilkur is not the active innovating structure known in industrial societies, and policy is by and large determined by traditional values which are embodied in the person of the ptil. His behavior sets policy and the behavior is expected to be not only normal but ideal. Over time, of course, he both introduces changes and, perhaps more importantly today, sanctions changes. For example, in the 1940's and early 50's, colonial officials had urged the transfer of Kirngu from the mountain top to the base of the mountains as an aid in the pacification and integration of the area (p. 66). Old Kirngu was relatively inaccessible and its isolation, it was believed, fostered provincialism. In 1956, Ptil Yarkur, looking for some way to assert his authority and break out of the mold of twenty-five years under the much beloved Ptil

Simnda, consulted the appropriate deities and decided to make the move. The inhabitants of Kirngu were given the district headquarters hamlet just at the foot of their mountain and the district headquarters were moved about a mile away. A few of the older inhabitants stayed on the mountain initially but soon moved down, some others dispersed to other villages, but some who had already moved away from the mountain hamlet joined the new settlement. The move was a symbolic break with the past and marked Yarkur's reign as independent and progressive.

The consequences of this move have been indeed far reaching. Ritual life has been altered extensively, for some of the customs of the ptilkur were inexorably tied to old Kirngu. This made it necessary to return to that place for certain rituals which meant that they became less public and less strictly observed. Other customs were modified to fit the circumstances of the new locale and this too has been a modernizing force. The most readily apparent changes from the move came from greater contact with the highway and transportation, governmentally introduced economic changes, and increased contact with other peoples, especially non-Margi. Ptil Yarkur's decision to move produced the greatest single chain of change the hamlet had known to that time; but, significantly, because Kirngu was regarded as the model hamlet by the rest of the ptilkur, change was sanctioned for all.

Although the ptil and bulama constitute the major elements of administration, there was an elaborate formal structure of government which, in theory, organized the ptilkur quite differently. This structure surrounded the ptil with a council which had both legal and ritual functions. The number of members, their titles, and duties varied among the various ptilkur, but all had councils and all in general performed the same functions. Many of the councils have virtually vanished because in the eyes of first the colonial and now the Nigerian governments,

they are even less useful than the bulama. However, the council at Gulagu was still active in 1960, and I knew all its members, though some offices were vacant.

There were seven members of the Gulagu council plus a quasi-member. Thlifu is the highest ranking commoner in the ptilkur. He is the head of the Council and frequently represents all commoners in ritual matters. His ritual position is more conspicuous than that of other members of the council and ritually he ranks just after the ptil. He, too, carries a verge though it lacks the magical properties of ptil's. This office is hereditary within the Kwazhi clan, the original population of Kirngu.

Makarama is the ptil's chief administrator or executive officer. He is appointed by the ptil from the maina of the royal clan and represents royalty on the council. Although there is no official heir presumptive to the ptil-ship, the makarama approaches it. His duties are many and varied. He will help the ptil in every way he can. He acts as spokesman on most occasions, particularly if the pronouncement is likely to be unpopular. After ptil makes a decision, it is the makarama who explains it and frequently argues with the plaintiff or the disputants. He is also the one most likely to evidence displeasure at offenses to ptil. He accompanies him and advises him, but his duties are almost exclusively administrative and apart from representing royalty he has no major ritual roles. As representative of royalty he is in effect, though not in title, the bulama of the royal village.

Zuli Dagu is the priest of the shrines at the hamlet Dagu located r-ear old Kirngu on the mountain. This office is hereditary in the Ghwa clan but was vacant in 1960. When the last zuli died, he had yet to be replaced. Zuli Tra, the priest in charge of the shrines at Tira, the third of the founding hamlets atop Mount Gulak, is hereditary in Ishidi. In 1960 the occupant was called a makarama because he was a "substitute" zuli since one cannot accept the office until fathering

a child and the heir had, at first, not achieved this status. Even after becoming a father he was unwilling to lead the decorous life demanded of a zuli and refused the office.

Ngwoma, the master of the royal ceremonies, is hereditary in the Humbili branch of Ghwa, and its occupant is in charge of the public ceremonies of the ptilkur. Midela, the leader in battle., was a tactical position only, for although he was the chief warrior, he lacked the power to start a war. The position is hereditary in the Ghumdia clan. Adanyptil[2] means literally "father of ptil[3]" This position is appointed by ptil from the Medugu Gidam, that is, Gidam who are ineligible to succeed to the office of ptil. He literally acts as though he were ptil's father, speaking to him as a father does to a son even to criticizing him to his face in public. He can also grant sanctuary to those fleeing the ptil if he chooses. It is a role to be played cautiously and carefully. He has no coercive power, and no one seems fully to understand his role as check on the abuses of power by ptil, and I heard criticism of his "disrespectful" behavior. Even he had a vague grasp of his function, saying only that it is the custom for him to behave like a father. At Gulagu where the ptil have been particularly strong, the office may be weaker and more confused. Birma is the ptil's personal mafa and ceremonial assistant. The position is quasi-hereditary in the mafa line. Since mafa, particularly in the past when they were less independent, had small families, and occasionally no sons, this position has frequently not been hereditary. (See Chapter 6 for a discussion of the succession.)

Ptil Ngkyagu's position is not that of a true member of the Council and would certainly not be so listed by anyone from Gulagu. However, Ptil Ngkyagu does have conspicuous ritual

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[2] In other publications I have spelled this term adangyaptil, and my notes consistently record that spelling. I heard the word as three morphemes/ ada, father; ngya, "of" (pronominal genitive construction); and ptil, king. In other uses I also recorded ngya as a genitive construction; however, Hoffmann (1963:63-64) convinces me that I was in error and that the correct term is nya. I have therefore modified the spelling from the earlier use.

[3] Among the Margi Titum, the similar title is "mother of ptil" which suggests connections with the Pabur (Cohen 1977).

relations with the Council which should be noted. He ceremonially receives a portion of the cow sacrificed at Yawal, he tends the royal graves, attends all public ceremonies and sits near but separate from other Council members. Additionally, he is the ptil's personal blacksmith and will be the royal undertaker.

The history of the ptilkur is manifest in the allocation of the positions on the council both in terms of which clans have and do not have seats and to the relative prestige associated with particular seats. Of the clans in the vicinity of Kirngu when the dynasty was established, the eldest, Kwazhi, provides the important position of thlifu. The other two clans were Ghwa, which was primarily centered in Dagu, and Ishidi, which was at Tra, and on the council Ghwa provides Zuli Dagu and Ngwoma, while Ishidi provides the Zuli Tra. It is noteworthy that the representatives from these earliest settlements are not bulama. The closest thing to a bulama on the council is the secular head of Kirngu itself, the makarama. He is an appointee of the ptil and a maina of the royal clan. These are the four founding clans of Gulagu; however, a fifth commoner clan is represented on the council and according to legend arrived at Gulagu shortly after the founding of the dynasty. This is Ghumdia which provides the midela. There are other clans with large enough population centers in Gulagu to claim it as their home ptilkur, but all of these either arrived subsequent to the crystallization of the Council or were located in hamlets who allied themselves with the Gulagu dynasty subsequent to its formation.

Collectively, the council was a body of advisors to the ptil. They represented the constituent clans in the ptilkur, but because the number of clans in the ptilkur has expanded, that is no longer the case. Although the representative quality of the council is lost, it still is the only body of commoners which has the official right and obligation to converse with ptil, and it is said that in former times they met with ptil frequently. In the late 1950's and early 60's they met with

him at major public feasts and at irregular festivals which averaged about twice a year. If we can count five yearly meetings as normal, it seems doubtful that additional meetings were scheduled, though the ptil could and did call on them for advice when he needed it or thought it wise. Of course, the individual members frequently visited in Kirngu and always stopped to talk with ptil. Finally, the thlifu, the makarama, the birma, and the adanyaptil all lived in the royal hamlet; and when they lived on the mountain, Dagu and Tra, the two zuli, were within hailing distance.

Two specific powers reside in portions of the council. The one frequently mentioned by members of the council is the so-called electoral power. Before the death of a ptil is announced, if possible, a new ptil is chosen by the Thlifu, the Zuli Dagu, the Zuli Tra, and the Midela Ghumdia. In most instances the choice was forced; for in the case of a thlida, there would be no question who must be chosen--the winner--and in those instances in which a ptil had died of natural causes, as in the case of Ptil Wampana, there had been no doubt in anyone's mind who would be the successor--the makarama. However, when Ptil Simnda died, his eldest son actively sought the job, as did Yarkur, the makarama. The council, surprising almost no one, chose Yarkur who was accepted by the colonial government. Although the electoral process may seem hollow, it should be looked at for its symbolic and expressive functions. The council members involved are all commoners and each represents a clan of the early state. Their "choice" expressed the commoners' acceptance of the new ptil--an acceptance which every ptil recognizes as necessary to a successful reign. If the council did not truly choose the ptil, they did validate him.

The second major power of some of the council's members was their right to serve as legal advisors to the ptil or to act as judges should the ptil for any reason not be able to judge. This was a most seriously regarded duty, and although it was less dramatic than choosing a new

ptil, it was far more important in the running of the ptilkur. Apart from the rare possibility of dramatic changes wrought by a ptil himself, the most important instrument for change and stability was the ptil's obligation to hear disputes and to judge them. It was in his court that tradition was upheld or change was sanctioned.

The legal advisors were the thlifu, the makarama, the birma, and the adanyaptil, all of whom, by tradition, lived in the royal hamlet. Again it will be noted that there is an intrinsic balanced representation. Although both the makarama and adanyaptil were both from the Gidam clan, the peculiar role of the latter made him less a force for that clan than a public defender for all persons. The absence of representation of the ngkyagu is not relevant since the ptil ngkyagu had the responsibility for settling their disputes.

The presence of the birma, who is a mafa, among the legal advisors is worthy of special note. The legal rights of the mafa are implicitly acknowledged in his position, but additionally the birma was expected to be above the petty interests of competing clans. His was a relatively powerful position.

Most cases were of a routine nature, and these were frequently settled in an informal manner, with the litigants appearing before the ptil as he sat in the pathla. If it was a pro forma request the decision might be made unilaterally by ptil, but at least one of his advisors was sure to be with him and he could usually get the others in a matter of moments should the cases seem to warrant it. A petitioner or litigant first approached the makarama who would try to find some informal solution in his role of protecting the ptil from petty affairs. Should the case look serious, he would procrastinate by saying he must call the legal advisors together. In the meantime fuller accounts could be gathered and the ptil and the advisors briefed, for the court did not restrict itself to versions presented in its proceedings, actively seeking other perspectives. Formal

pleadings before the ptil and his advisors took place in the pathla with on-lookers adding to the scene. Litigants often felt it to their advantage to flatter or reward a ptil or his advisors in advance of a decision,, but such acts invariably took place in public, in which case, the recipient was aware that the final decision could not show obvious partiality. This courtesy--for it was little more--was defined as a "bribe" by the colonial and national governments and prohibited, though it has still been known to happen.

In the cases heard before a ptil or in those heard before a court, time and time again the issues were clear and their results predictable, yet all concerned found such observations irrelevant and certainly no reason not to proceed with the trials. To them, each case was unique-as it is in the narrowest sense. I have concluded that although Margi may be able to provide examples of typical disputes and appropriate judgments, abstract law is secondary to the process of settling disputes. It is less a case of the means being more important than the end than that they believe that all law is case law. It might be appropriate to say that the Margi do not have a concept of law so much as a concept of arbitration.[2]

The legal functions of the council, so important in the past, are those most severely affected by the changes brought about by colonialism and a non-tribal government. Not only has its effective power been obviated, it has been prohibited. The British established regional courts composed of several ptil from an area, which made the council superfluous. Although the ptil still make decisions based on tradition, the consultation with council members is lost. I must add that neither the process nor the result seems substantially different from the older practice, as best as I can tell. It is interesting that ngkyagu are also beginning to bring their disputes to the court or sometimes directly to the ptil. The presence of ngkyagu before him seemed to exasperate

[2] In this the Margi are reminiscent of the Tiv, of whom Bohannan has said they have laws but not law (1957:57); but it should be noted that the social organization of the Margi is vastly different from the Tiv.

Ptil Yarkur, and he complained to one that ngkyagu used to be more peaceful people and he never had to settle their disputes. Thereby he revealed not so much that ngkyagu behavior was changing as that the legal system was changing and they were looking to him for final authority.

Other duties of some council members were at public rituals. The thlifu had minor roles at many rituals, usually in a kind of dialogue with Ptil, either giving him something or receiving something from him. The symbol of the Thlifu as the commoners unquestionably accounts for these dramas. The ngwoma had only ritual functions, some already mentioned, and the birma's principal ritual role was as the acolyte of the ptil, a function he also served in the ptil's personal rituals. The duties of the council members are summarized in the following diagram:

Diagram 8-2.

Duties of Council by Office and Clan

Clan or Social Category	Electors	Legal Advisors	Major Ritual Duties
Kwazhi	Thlifu	Thlifu	Thlifu
Ghwa	Zuli Dagu		Ngwoma
Ishidi	Zuli Tra		
Ghumdia	Midela		
Gidam-maina		Makarama	
Gidam-medugu		Adanyaptil	
Mafa		Birma	Birma

In general, the Council of Ptil Gulagu was organized in such a way as to give representation, to distribute power, and to limit that power among the various special interests of the ptilkur. The only offices with duties in more than one category are the thlifu and the birma- The double symbolism of the thlifu as representative of Kwazhi and as the supreme commoner makes his multiple roles understandable, and the ritual functions of the birma are not related to his constituency but rather to his responsibilities to the ptil.

The balanced representation, however, is unrecognized; nor is there any legend of the establishing of the council which would indicate the intent of the founding fathers. Margi do not see that it is the commoners of the original inhabitants who are the electors, nor do they see that the legal advisors represent the major strata of society. To them it is simply a matter of custom; it is the way they have always done it. Such lack of awareness says much about the pervasiveness of culture but raises many questions about the kinds of structural changes which they will make as conditions alter. It is difficult to imagine them developing new forms of representation if they are unaware that their old system achieved that end.

Since the later days of British colonialism, the powers of the council have eroded. The failure to reappoint members is best understood as a consequence of modernization. But emasculation is not entirely new to the councils, for as we initially observed the heart of Margi government is encompassed in the ptil/bulama relationship, and this clearly pre-dates colonialism. In reality the elaborate structure of the council and its anciently conceived checks and balances have for many generations been ineffective. This is not to say that it was not functional; it undoubtedly was very important and necessary to act out the illusion of election, of checks and balances, whether they achieved these ends or not. The obvious failures of the council as an electoral body have been noted. Given the great power of the ptil and the fact that the advisors all lived in the royal hamlet, there are doubts as to how effective their legal advice was in representing the people at large. Even the role of adanyaptil was probably weak in strong ptilkur. We are left with the ritual duties of the council, which did continue into the 1960's, as its only effective functions.

The ideology of the ptil-ship in part justifies the diminution of importance of the council. The concept of divine kingship is one which is difficult to limit--apart from the ultimate

limitation., regicide. It has been achieved in other systems by emphasizing the symbolism of the king without developing the dimensions of his secular power. But that has not been a part of the Margi concept of ptil. The Dzirngu ptil have always been very strong and ruled their ptilkur with something approaching complete authority. The control of the hamlets was in the hands of his delegates, and the relatively small and compact size of the Dzirngu ptilkur made the ptil's power immediate and applicable. In the time of Ptil Wampana, when the authority of bulama was more important, he was said to know everything of consequence going on in the ptilkur. The knowledge was necessary for this was how he collected "taxes"; by knowing how much a man's harvest had been, he could levy an appropriate commodity tax.

The proof of the ultimate power of the ptil was in the large number of thlida which afflicted the ptilkur. If the office had been weak, few would have sought it, particularly when the consequences of failure were so drastic.

But the ideology of royal omnipotence does not fully explain why the council, which by its organization had the potential of representing the interests of the ptilkur before the ptil, failed. The council seems ideally organized to articulate demands of the people; its members reflected the major constituencies of the government and its members, except for those who are members of the royal clan, are not appointed by the ptil.

The answer to this riddle seems to lie ultimately in structural arrangements within the ptilkur which have apparently developed subsequent to the council or which, as seems equally probable, were unrecognized by those early founders of the government of the ptilkur. The arrangement of the council assumes that the relevant categories within the ptilkur are the clans, individually and collectively, the mafa, and the ngkyagu as corporate groups. With the exception of the ngkyagu this assumption is questionable.

Although the clans were unquestionably more localized when the Margi were more contained in the mountains or clustered for mutual protection around inselbergs, we have seen that they were quite frangible. The tradition of migration is an established part of Margi culture and almost every clan has a legend of migration which includes moves within the last 7S years. The several branches of some clans indicate that those moves were rarely of whole groups but rather of segments which split off and relocated elsewhere. This is indicative of both a lack of clan solidarity as well as a lack of authoritative clan leadership. None of this is surprising given our discussion of Margi clans in Chapter 5. When this amorphous, acephalous structure is used as a basis of political organization it fails.

The lack of clan authority, the relative independence of the households, even the custom of localized deities particular to hamlets, all have produced hamlet orientations among Margi which, if not superseding clan loyalties, at least divide the loyalties of individuals. Every compound head is both a member of a clan and a hamlet; and though members of his hamlet will include clansmen, their mutual concerns are local ones and may be totally unrelated to the concerns of clansmen in other hamlets. They will have more interaction with neighbors from other clans than with their own clansmen from distant hamlets. If all the members of a clan lived in the same vicinity, their representatives on the council could then know their needs and desires and the structure might be more meaningful. But this is not the case. More crucially, none of the clans who arrived in Gulagu subsequent to Ghumdia have any representation on the council. Thus the council fails to represent the interests of its clan members and fails as a representative body. Quite possibly if it had been an effective organization, its representative base might have been expanded as new clans moved into the area, but its lack of relevance would never lead any of the newer clans to feel a need to be represented on it.

The failure of the council to formulate demands has probably increased both the need for and the likelihood of regicide. Such avenues of response as there were entirely informal; the ptilkur were small enough and the maina numerous enough that individual ptil could know what was going on. But this is neither formal nor is it likely to generate the kind of information which the populace wants delivered to the ptil.

Using the bulama as hamlet representatives would have been ineffective, given their dependence upon the ptil. The control which a ptil has over his bulama destroys their ability to represent their hamlets in any matter which would be unpopular with the ptil. Their positions are dependent upon the ptil, not upon the members of their hamlet.

In sum, we may characterize the representational system of Margi political structure as incomplete. On the one hand the council which would appear to have representational potential, and perhaps was originally conceived in this way, lacks contact with or relevancy for the new populace. It is based essentially upon a non-functioning system of representation. Further, because clans were spread in several hamlets, local problems--as opposed to clan problems--were difficult to formulate. On the other hand, the bulama/hamlet relationship, which seems to have the potential for a representational system, is not structured in such a way as to achieve these ends.

Of equal importance is the structured arrangement of authority in this system, for here again we find a peculiar diffuseness and incompleteness in the system. Authority requires allegiance; they are reciprocal behaviors. There is virtually only one such unambiguous relationship in the Margi political structure. That instance is the authority of the ptil over the populace and their allegiance to him. No other political figure has such an autonomous relationship. To an extent this may be viewed as a consequence of the ideology of the divine

kingship which acknowledges only one ultimate power, but in reality the structural relationship of the ptilkur prevents anyone in the traditional system from accumulating authority and allegiance.

The potentials of three roles should be discussed in this respect: the zuli, the council member, and the bulama. Of these the role of hamlet zuli had the highest potential because he was outside the political system and thus avoided the various checks that seem to have protected the power of the ptil. The potentiality of the zuli as a leader depends upon his ability to transform his ritual authority into secular power and his further ability to secede from his ptilkur. But the role of zuli within traditional Margi culture seems to have never had a significant secular component, and the religious power which zuli have had is difficult to translate into secular power when the geographic spheres of zuli are so limited and the mobility of their constituency so high. Today, the national government recognizes only secular authority, and, short of a revitalization movement, it seems unlikely that the zuli could develop any political functions.

The council members as representatives of clans would seem to have some power base. However, the internal structure of the clan, as noted, is such that there are neither mechanisms nor ideology which validate the council member as a practical leader of his clan. In point of fact he has no power over clan members because there is no structure for the exercise of that authority but ultimately because there are so few resources which are intrinsically the clan's. There is no way he can reward or punish his kinsmen by virtue of their being in the same clan. Nor does the system delegate to the council member duties which might lead clansmen to rely upon him for his achievements. Had they such delegation of power the members of the council would have been in far stronger positions and could conceivably have translated clan allegiance into a true power base.

The bulama are in much the opposite position of the council members. They have delegated power, but they have no traditional allegiance. Even the ephemeral ties which cause kinsmen to acknowledge a council member as "their" man are lacking for the bulama. The ties of co-residence are not manifest in an ideology and their impermanence is widely recognized. Despite migrations one is always a member of a given clan, but his hamlet is changeable. Nor is the office of bulama based on rules which provide any security for an occupant of the role. The fact that it tends to be hereditary is a statement with regard to the pool from which the individual is chosen. It is revealing that no one says that the bulama is a hereditary office; it is said that the ptil appoints him. Thus the office is thought to be entirely in the control of the ptil.

The organization of the Margi kingdom inhibits the development of any significant autonomous authority/allegiance relationships among existing political statuses. This contributes to the centralization of political power. But it is a circuitous arrangement of authority and access which makes for a diffuseness to all political relationships except for the ptil-subject bond. Even that is likely to have a stronger ideological and ritual element than a direct instrumental power component; for the ptil's ritual acts are always directly satisfying and representative of his subjects, and he rarely issues a directive within the hearing of the populace at large.

Some of the difficulties with this system will be seen in the discussion of four cases below.

Case 1

Shika is a member of the Ghwa clan and a resident of the hamlet of Gu'u. His clan is represented on the ptil's council by Psi, and the bulama of his giwa is Usidagha who is a member of Gidam. Usidagha is required by ptil to see that all males of the hamlet pay their annual head

tax, and although there is a general idea of the amount which should be collected, seasonal fluctuations in population can account for a plus or minus figure of several men in a hamlet the size of Gu'u. There are few formal procedures. Bulama Usidagha is illiterate as are all the adults of the hamlet, and consequently tax receipts have little validity and are frequently treated as being transferable. In this situation, Usidagha scrupulously saw that taxes were paid by all the hamlet members who belong to Ghwa but it was said that he was lax about collections from his own clan,, Gidam.

Although Shika paid his tax and received his receipt, he is upset at the situation. Others of his kinsmen in the hamlet were also aware of the situation, but they were not inclined to do anything about it since they generally regard tax collection as a capricious act and a tax receipt means little to them. They regarded Usidagha's behavior as a privilege of the office.

Shika was openly hostile to Usidagha and argued with him frequently, but beyond this there was little he could do. Bulama Usidagha owed nothing to him and apart from the inconvenience of Shika's enmity, which actually was troublesome, there was little that Shika could do to remedy the situation. Usidagha's only superior is the ptil, but Shika thought an appeal to him would have been virtually impossible. There are no mechanisms for direct appeals; the courts are for other kinds of disputes. A direct visit to the royal hamlet and a talk to ptil was out of the question, such things are just not done; Shika believed that if he attempted to complain he would have been censured for bothering the ptil. Furthermore, the nature of his complaint was not clear to many Margi. He had got his receipt and so he was not wronged; concern for kinsmen outside his immediate family is puzzling to most.

Shika did not consult Psi about the matter. He recognized that Psi, as a member of the council, could speak to the ptil about the situation but Psi lives in another hamlet and has no

quarrel with Usidagha. Shika did not believe that Psi would feel inclined to champion his complaint, and in this he was probably correct. Psi expressed two feelings about the case-, first that he had no real knowledge about conditions in Gu'u, and secondly, that he could not see why Shika was complaining; "he has his receipt."

In this situation it is clear that the traditional political structure and the way it is organized tends to frustrate the complaints of a citizen who felt that he had been wronged. In the end, it was easier to live with the situation than change it. Or so it seemed; actually, the next year saw a far more equitable enforcement of tax collection by Bulama Usidagha. However, the reason was far more likely to be explained in the interpersonal conflict between Shika and Usidagha than anything implicit in the political structure. Usidagha, of course, acknowledged no change.

Case 2

Bila is a member of Ghumdia, who resides in Gayao where Bulama Ikida is a member of the same clan. During the United Nations Plebiscite of 1959 Bila's sympathies were with the anti-Nigerian forces (which he perceived as anti-Fulani) and he allied himself with Maina Ufuma, the incipient leader of a thlida, who led the opposition forces. The forces for a pro-Nigerian vote were led by the ptil, who was literally on the payroll of the Northern Region government. Bulama Ikida was a supporter of the ptil. Although he apparently came to this decision without any force being placed upon him, it is difficult to see how he could have maintained any other position. (I did know at least one bulama who after the plebiscite said that he had not favored union with Nigeria, but had not let his position be known publicly.) Bulama are in the employ of the ptil and to that extent they also had a proprietary interest in a vote favorable to Nigeria. Ikida is known as a fair and honest bulama and although he tried to

persuade Bila to accept his political views, he never used his position to influence Bila's vote. Wiya, the representative of Ghumdia on the council, was also firmly allied with the ptil. In his case he had far less of an investment in the outcome., but it seems very likely that his position in the establishment, however defunct, was sufficient to influence his vote.

The opinions of Bila were shared by an overwhelming majority of Margi as the subsequent vote revealed. However logical this is, it is not surprising that this information was not fully comprehended by the ptil. It is not surprising that the bulama did not inform him of the magnitude of the opposition; they did not wish to tell him anything which would displease him. The council also failed to inform him because its members held their own unrepresentative views and because it is difficult to tell so superior an official that which he does not want to hear. To be sure, the ptil was not totally unaware of the situation, but he never thought his side would be defeated,, much less by such a wide margin. Voting was not done by hamlet and it is not possible to know precisely how the vote in Gayao went, but based on my conversations I would be very surprised if anyone other than Ikida and Wiya voted in favor of joining Nigeria.

The vote was a very serious embarrassment to the ptil and ultimately led Maina Ufuma to make an unsuccessful attempt to unseat him, which in former times would certainly have been expressed as an attempt on the life of the ptil. Bila remained a supporter of Ufuma for almost a year and during that period would certainly have accepted him as ptil should he have achieved the status. Eventually Ufuma's position became unacceptable and he lost his supporters who returned to the ptil with no loss.

In this case we see a different kind of failing of the structure, specifically its inability to represent the will of the people. Had it not been for a very complicated subsequent political picture, it would doubtlessly have led to the ouster of the ptil.

Case 3

Cases in which the system works are routine and undramatic. It works every day in the conduct of ordinary affairs. When events are normal, it may be said that it is because the ptilkur is in good order, and so it will be said that the ptil is doing his job well. One simple illustration will, however, reveal his legitimate intervention into the lives of the citizens of the ptilkur.

On a spring evening lightning struck and killed two donkeys. Lightning is extremely feared and deaths in the savanna region are not uncommon, but two animals being killed simultaneously was considered unusual. At the same time it was obviously a blessing that two persons had not been killed. There was a good deal of talk about the incident and the ptil decided that it was both a warning and a sign and so he declared that the following Saturday would be observed as an asadaka: all work was to cease. The word was spread to the bulama who then informed the populace. This occurred during the hiatus in the rains mentioned in Chapter 7, and by the time that Saturday arrived there had been three good rains, and many were anxious to do more planting. On the appointed day, Siza, a vigorous young man of about thirty, confessed that he would very much like to be planting with his family, but he had no doubt about the ptil's ability to sense the necessity for the asadaka nor his authority to demand it. Siza stayed home and marveled at the power of the ptil.

In a less dramatic way Siza's bulama announced later in the year that the hamlet was to provide a work party for one of the ptil's farms, and although Siza had other plans for that day he canceled them to fulfill his obligation. He could not readily express himself as to why he would do this beyond saying that it was the custom to do so, but it was clear that he felt that he owed his ptil allegiance and this was but a manifestation of that relationship

Case 4

This final description reveals a situation which, in 1960, was totally new to the political order, demonstrating ways in which the system fails and ways in which it works.

Malam Mashim was a local school teacher at the Mission School and lived in the hamlet of Mbala. He is a member of Birdling which arrived in Gulagu subsequent to the crystallization of the political structure and has no representation on the council. It does provide the bulama for M. Mashim's home hamlet, but it has no such position in Mbala which is a very heterogeneous grouping with many of the inhabitants being employees of the Mission or otherwise dependent upon it. His education was through Teacher's Training College, but he is considerably better educated than others from the ptilkur of Gulagu. He is aware of the existence of a world beyond the Margi and their neighbors; he is impressed by European culture and dresses in that style. He is, however, at heart a son of Gulagu. He has developed a deep interest in Margi history and culture and he deliberately identifies himself with that tradition. Unlike most other persons he identifies himself by his given name plus his clan name rather than his place of residence as is the local custom. He is proud of his fal. Although a Christian, he is fascinated by the public rituals which center around Ptil Gulagu. Mbala is hardly more than a mile from Kirngu and he visits frequently and never misses a ceremony.

Basically, Mashim wants to identify with Margi culture, but he is torn between the ideology of Christianity and what he perceives as the modern world, and the provincial ideology of the Margi in general and Gulagu in particular. He must deny the efficacy of the rites surrounding the ptil, yet he is attracted to the dignity and pomp of the office. In the truest sense, a sense which has little to do with politics, Mashim is a conservative. He senses that something is

"wrong" with the system. It is not that he sees or understands its failures so much as he recognizes that the system is not modern. In particular he feels that it is not representative. Not being of a clan with a council member he has not even the illusion of representation, and he is sophisticated enough to see that such representation would be vacuous. He sees the bulama as a potentially relevant office, yet he is vaguely aware that it was not responsive to the members of the giwa. He led a successful movement to make the office elective; however, the position still goes to an older more traditional member of the community. Mashim approved, at least for the time, for he respected the traditions despite his longing for change. He talks of change a great deal, but it is always reform. He obviously receives a great deal of gratification from the smooth operation of the system and in all ways he is a loyal subject of the ptil, but he senses more than sees its limitation. Although he only foresees change in the most gradual and conserving sense, it is Mashim and the very few like him in whom are planted the seeds of radical change. Failing to understand the ideological basis of the ptilship, they do not see that the minor kinds of change they want and achieve will ultimately undermine the system.

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It is clear that there were two mingled themes in traditional Margi political organization (1) the ptilkur as the institution which articulated and achieved public goals and (2) the ptilkur, in the person of the ptil, as the mystical symbol of the people. In the past, the governmental functions were limited because, in part, Margi value self-help and self-reliance, but primarily because the norms of kinship and family interaction--the routine of ordinary life-did not fall within the public domain. However, the ritual importance of the ptil was such that the institution was essential to the ceremonial life of the society. Thus, the populace was tied to a ptil not only in terms of political allegiance but in terms of ritual dependency.

As a governmental system, the Margi ptilkur--despite vestiges of balanced representation--is highly centralized. Although changes in the person of the ptil have been common, the basic structure of the system seems to have never been challenged. This conservatism may have been because the deficiencies of the governmental system were relatively unimportant in the light of its limited impact upon daily life. But a more apparent inhibition against structural change has been the ritual primacy of the ptil which is applicable to all--represented and unrepresented, satisfied and unsatisfied alike. Thus, the ideological importance of the ptil has mitigated against radial change-

In the pre-colonial and early colonial periods, when population was more stable, contact with the outside world sporadic, and conceptions of the world more provincial, the Margi political system was from all evidence quite adequate. It preserved their social independence and gradually welded a political identity which superseded that of clan and local community.

In the second quarter of the twentieth century more demands were placed upon it as the colonial government used it as the basis of local administration. It adjusted and survived,, no doubt in part because its ideological base was never challenged. British administrators recognized its divine kingship for what it was and went along with it. However, the introduction of schooling and proselytizing by both Christians and Muslims are an inevitable challenge to its symbolic foundations, and the desire of the Nigerian government for a secular leadership suggests that the traditional system cannot long survive. Yet, I confess, I was not prepared for the changes I found in 1973 and 1981, which will be discussed in Chapter 10.

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Chapter 9

Ritual

(Zibsu)

All peoples live in environments – both natural and social – which are dominated by forces and elements to which they must adjust. Social relations order events; technology and economics grant a measure of control over the forces of nature; and ideology imposes an intellectual and conceptual order to all experience and awareness.

Ritual is a special form of adjustive behavior; as a manifestation of ideology, it pervades life, accompanying technology as well as social relations. Ritual acts have both instrumental and expressive aspects; that is, they attempt to effect desired ends and they express--and through expression, they validate--a relationship between the society and the forces with which it must reckon. From the discussion of the world (dunya) in Chapter 2 it is clear Margi believe that virtually all events are ultimately controlled by spiritual forces. Consequently, ritual can, and frequently does, accompany the most routine, seemingly non-religious behavior such as smelting, planting, and politics. In other instances the ritual act stands more or less alone, other techniques being unknown or distrusted, as when rituals are intended to cure illness. There are other occasions such as calendrical feasts wherein the desired ends are much more general and ritual correspondingly more expressive and symbolic. Rituals accompanying routine events such as farming have been discussed in the context of those occasions. This chapter deals with those rituals which concern themselves more exclusively with the supernatural forces which control men's destinies.

These rituals may be classified into three groups: calendrical, life cycle, and private ceremonies. All are highly symbolic, but the calendrical ceremonies are least concerned with

particular goals and the private rites are the most specific. Informants are usually unable to objectify any goal of the calendrical rituals although they are aware that they are necessary for the correct ordering of society and that they occur in relation to the agricultural cycle. Such ceremonies vary in form and name from ptilkur to ptilkur although there are obvious functional equivalents in most cases. They also vary slightly in the time at which they occur. Variation sometimes is a consequence of the lunar calendar in different ptilkur being out of synchronization, and sometimes in neighboring ptilkur they are held on different dates in order to allow people to attend the ceremonies in other communities. Life cycle ceremonies are directed more to specific goals, being concerned with the stages in persons' lives. However, they are not oriented to the particular needs of individuals so much as the general needs and expectations of the set. These too vary but not so much from ptilkur to ptilkur as from clan to clan. Private ceremonies are usually quite specific and are so recognized by the participants. They are done for desired and expected ends although other symbolic needs may be apparent in the rites. The manner in which they may be performed is quite variable, and two individuals attempting to achieve the same goal through essentially the same ceremony may perform it differently.

Variation in ritual may seem to be something of a contradiction in terms, but it is very much a part of a Margi pattern- -a recognition of which is important to understanding their approach to life. Their instrumental approach to life has been previously noted, and this extends even to ritual affairs. There is no single approved way for doing rituals although there are limits within which the variation occurs. They are much more concerned with the goals of the ritual than the manner in which it is done. This is illustrated in a man's attitudes toward his most sacred object, his Iju Kir (literally, god head). This is a shrine to the supreme supernatural which every

adult male possesses and to which he is expected to sacrifice once a year. It is a small pot, but it is terminologically differentiated from pots used as containers which are called intim while pottery shrines – including Iju Kir – are i'iwa. It is common to observe an Iju Kir in a compound in the most casual places; once I saw one being played with by the owner's children. They are, therefore, not infrequently broken, but should this happen it is not a serious occurrence. The attitude of the Margi is that they can always get another. Although they would not say it, it is apparent that the shrine itself is less important than the ceremony. At one level of analysis we might conclude that they do not confuse a sign for that which it symbolizes.

The three major public calendrical ceremonies celebrated at Gulagu are Yawal, by far the most important, Anggarawai, and the Digu Digal. It is convenient to consider them in this order, although with respect to the calendar the Digu Digal occurs first. Yawal takes place at the end of the fourth month (July) and may extend one day into the fifth, Anggarawai occurs near the middle of the eleventh month (February) and Digu Digal is supposed to occur in the first month, although in 1960 it occurred early in the second (April). The descriptions contained herein are based upon observations in 1960 supplemented by interviews.

Yawal is a four-day festival[1] which occurs at the height of the rains, a time of joy and expectation. The skies are bright blue with towering white clouds and the air is pleasantly humid. All planting is completed and the new crops are beginning to sprout. The mountains which have been yellow with dried grass are now lushly green. It is the time of the year which nearly all Margi say they favor. This is the time in which they say that they formerly fought wars and

[1] In Vaughan 1964b I mistakenly and inexplicably stated that it is a three-day festival.

raided the giwa of other ptilkur. By tradition, this was also the time for a thlida and the subsequent installation of a new ptil. Though I could find no account of an actual thlida occurring at this time, events which occurred during each Yawal have always been interpreted as symbolic of the strength of the pt9l and thus of the prospects for the coming year. Both symbolically and consciously, Yawal is a time of virility and growth; it is a time for optimistic beginnings and displays of vigor and prowess, of conviviality and happiness. No other Margi ceremony compares with it in importance, in symbolism, or in the personal pleasures evoked.

The feasting at Yawal is extensive and each family spends the preceding weeks preparing for the festival. Traditionally each hamlet kills a cow, the cost being shared by all according to their means Some hamlets too small to finance or consume a cow may cooperate with others, a few may kill only a goat, and large hamlets may kill several cows. Other foods are prepared for the feasting as well. The populations of hamlets are swollen at this time as itinerant townsmen often return for this festival. At least one inexplicable custom has arisen in Gulagu where the girls, with considerable planning, make or have made identical dresses of European style which they wear to the social dancing. They also dress in men's socks and plastic men’s shoes, eye glasses, and ornate head ties. None of this clothing in whole or in part was worn during any other season of the year, it was not worn during any of the ritual portions of Yawal, and no one was able to give any origin or significance for the tradition.

The cows to be sacrificed and eaten during the celebration are staked out on the evening of the first day of Yawal, remembering that Margi days start with the evening. There is considerable visiting and viewing of the cattle but no further activities until early the following morning. The sounds of morning, of goats, chickens, birds, blend with snatches of conversation

and laughter as women rise with the anticipation and joy of the festival. One can hear sounds of grain being ground to the accompaniment of women singing as they prepare for the meals of the day. Men appear dressed in the traditional ram skin pizhi, and in Kirngu, the birma sweeps the pathla in anticipation of the crowds who will fill it later in the day.

Occasionally in these very early hours one may see a man and his wife come out of their compound and kneel before the family fertility shrine, the koptu bzir (koptu = shrine, bzir = child), where he will place her hand upon it as he murmurs a prayer for her fertility.

About an hour after sunrise most of the men of the royal hamlet assemble in front of the ptil's compound, where they greet one another. Traditionally, the Makarama announces that the ptil is giving a cow to be slaughtered for the hamlet--in addition to the cow which will be slaughtered for his own compound and in addition to the cow purchased by the home owners. This is more or less expected but the assembled group responds with lavish appreciation. Shortly thereafter, the ptil and his birma bring from the royal compound yet another cow, mambil thla (spirit cow), to be tied in the pathla to wait the afternoon's ritual. The mambil thla is to the ptilkur what the other cattle are to individual hamlets. This animal is treated more ceremoniously and when it is led from the compound by the birma, the ptil walks along carrying his sacred staff.

Although the mambil thla is not killed until the afternoon, the other cows are killed that morning. This permits people to come from their hamlets to view the sacrifice for the ptilkur. There is a certain amount of ritual which is associated with these slaughterings. Ideally the cows are laid on their sides with feet to the east and their heads to the north, their mouths are bound to keep them from crying out, and their throats are cut. The bound mouths are characteristic of sacrifices – goats as well – it being thought offensive for the animal to cry out in agony. In

practice the cattle are hard to handle and some of the details of the proper method may be missed.

The morning's only other ritual activity is a formal ceremony held at the koptu bzir of each compound in which there is a young child. A chicken is sacrificed for the youngest child of each of the wives in the compound. The maximum age for this ceremony is imprecise, but probably no children older than five or six are the subject of the ritual. The shrine itself is nothing more than the rim of a cooking pot placed at the entrance of the compound. It should be placed to the right but this is not invariable.[2] Also to the right of the entrance one usually finds a large up-right stone called palu and to the left there is, less frequently, a smaller stone. In mountain compounds these stones are an integral part of the compound wall, while in less rocky areas they are placed by the mat or mud wall. Occasionally the koptu is covered by a larger stone to protect it, but much more frequently it is allowed to become covered with dirt and it has to be excavated for Yawal. As the youngest child of the compound grows older the koptu falls into disuse and is forgotten, although excavations at even deserted compounds will reveal its remains.

The chicken to be sacrificed is supplied by the child's mother. A mild fermented sorghum called psu (not to be confused with the stronger sorghum beverage called mpadlu drunk on social occasions) is also used in the rite. I have also seen mixtures of sorghum flour and water as well as goat's milk and water substituted for the psu. The ceremony is performed by the father who first pours one of these fluids on the koptu. Some men also pour a little on each of the stones at the entrance, but this is not considered necessary. The child's father then takes its hand and blows

[2] Variation in customs is sometimes deliberately an attempt to change or break a chain of unfortunate occurrences. If, for example, a compound has not had births for a number of years, or if the infants have died, the koptu bzir may be relocated in the hope of changing the pattern. Similarly, families leave compounds that have featured misfortune, and persons vary rituals seeking relief from a string of bad luck.

into it saying "masa masa," a phrase which has no lexical meaning. This is done twice if the child is female and three times if it is male. Feathers are plucked from he back of the chicken and are placed on the head of the child. The throat of the chicken is cut and the blood allowed to spurt on the koptu and the entrance stones. Later, the chicken will be cooked and eaten by the father and his friends. A small portion of the cooked meat may be placed on the koptu and when the diners have finished they will wash their hands and pour a little water on the koptu. Still later, the feathers of the chicken are placed on a piece of broken pottery or piece of calabash and left along a nearby path. On occasion some of the mash from the making of the psu is placed with this roadside offering.

The manifest purpose of the koptu bzir ceremony is to insure the good health and well being of the child and by extension all of the children of the compound. Meanings for specific parts of the ceremony are not known and this may account for much of the variation. However, the custom of leaving offerings from feasts along paths is widespread; it is considered an offering to the yal and shatar who travel at night. This practice may be done at any time in order to incur the favor of these spirits or to indicate gratitude for an especially fine meal.

The koptu bzir ceremony fits into the theme of fertility and growth so dominant during Yawal. This interpretation is confirmed by the fact that diviners frequently instruct barren women to make sacrifices at the family koptu bzir to relieve their condition, and it may be used as a place to pray for improved fertility privately.

The association of two with females and three with males is fundamental in Margi ritual. Each man has what is called his kwatu which is determined by the sex of his first child. His kwatu is two if that child was a female, three if it was a male. This then determines much of his

ritual life. He will do certain rites either two or three times or he will do rituals after two or three days, two or three weeks, or two or three months according to his kwatu.

In the early afternoon of the first day of Yawal, the ptil and the birma accompanied by two young girls carry psu to the four public Yal at old Kirngu atop the mountain. The girls go only to help carry the psu and were not included in the ritual when the ptil lived on the mountain. At that time the itiwa from the shrine would have been brought to ptdl'5 compound and returned the following day, but the resettlement has led to this modification. But it is probably not insignificant that the girls rather than boys assist in the ritual. As psu is put in the i'iwa at the places of the yal, Ptil swears to be generous and just "even to Matakam and Plesar (Fulani)," he prays that Gulagu might continue to be prosperous and be the leader of Margi, and he prays that he might be able to honor the yal on the next Yawal. It is said that should the ptil fail to observe these customs or do them insincerely, great misfortune and disease would befall the ptilkur. Ptil Yarkur acknowledged that should this happen the people could justly blame the ptil for offending the yal and overthrow him. Formerly, the psu left in one of i'iwa was "read" to predict the harvest of the coming fall. It is also believed that should the ptil offend the yal the rain clouds will stop at a certain place in the north and not rain at Gulagu.

As the ptil returns to his compound no one greets him or speaks to him, which is, of course, unusual. One of Ptil Yarkur's brothers severely chastised one of his sons whom he thought--inaccurately as it happened--had spoken to Ptil This is a solemn moment during Yawal, an otherwise festive occasion. The future of the ptilkur is determined by these acts, which not only remind people of their vulnerability but also reflect the vulnerability of the ptil.

Later in the afternoon, but well before sundown, a very large and festive crowd gathers in the pathla to observe the sacrificing and division of the mambil cow. The crowd contains not only people from other hamlets of Gulugu but other ptilkur as well and is so large that itinerant traders may set up tables on its periphery and ambitious women may sell mpadlu. Ptil sits surrounded by his council – plus the Ptil ngkyagu and his assistant. The latter two are clearly a part of the ceremonial group but sit apart from it. There are many other ngkyagu there who sing and play the instruments traditionally associngated with them, the nzir, a small single headed drum, and the kiriharahara, a bowed lute. These men are dressed in their pizhi, the traditional garment of Margi men. Although this garment was only occasionally seen in 1960, it is the ceremonial garb of men and it is likely to be worn on any important ritual occasion.

When the crowd has reached an appropriately large size, the ptil retires to his compound to reemerge wearing his pizhi, the royal cape of hyrax skins, and carrying an ancient dagger. His head is uncovered revealing his royal hair lock. This is the only day of the year that he can be seen by the public with his head bared. The cow is readied for the kill by having its feet and mouth bound. It is placed in a "seated" position facing the late afternoon sun. The loose skin under the neck is stripped from chin to breastbone by the birma. The ptil then sits directly in front of the animal and once again he prays as he did to the yal at old Kirngu The crowd is quiet as they listen to his words. Following the prayer he thrusts the dagger into the throat of the cow toward the heart. The blood which spurts out is caught in a container by the thlifu, the highest ranking commoner.

The cow is divided with specified portions going to each of the members of the council, except that the Adanyaptil receives only a portion of the cow killed that morning for the ptil's

compound. The allocation of portions is made by the ngwoma although the birma does the butchering. Each member will take his portion back to his hamlet where he will share it with his neighbors. The ngkyagu get the cow's head. Everyone leaves meat from the cattle killed this day on their roofs for the spirits who travel at night.

In 1960, Ptil Yarkur obviously felt the killing of the mambdl thla and his unusual appearance to be a very special occasion, and while the cow was being divided he called me over and asked me to sit before him. There he once again told me the legend of Mbrum's founding of Gulagu. He proudly displayed the iron dagger which is only used for this sacrifice and the sacred bundle used in the court for the taking of oaths. Perhaps in recapitulating for me these wonderful events he was reaffirming the validity of the ptilkur.

With the division of the mambdl thla, the first day's activities are concluded although the conversation and conviviality continues well into the night. This is the most important day of Yawal; certainly, it is the most crowded with ritual activities. Other days, particularly the third, are devoted more to visiting, feasting, and social dancing. There is no dancing at night because there is no moon at this time of the month, but on this night it is unusually quiet because of the spirits who will be about looking for food.

The activities of the second day of Yawal begin in the predawn hours. The ptil arises and goes out of his compound, lights a torch and throws it high into the dark sky. As he throws it he prays as before for strength and wisdom to lead the ptilkur, but his voice is choked and the words strained and garbled for it is said that the spirits who fill the night are clutching at his throat. The length of time his torch stays lighted is considered an omen of the fortunes of the ptilkur during the coming year. If the spirits are pleased with him they will keep the torch supported and lit.

When the ptil lived atop the mountain, the torch was thrown off a cliff onto the top of the trees below; now, he tries to throw it into a tree in the pathla. Many say that during Yawal of 1952 Ptil Simnda's torch went out quickly and before the next Yawal he had committed suicide (p. 67) Following this, others light torches and throw them into the air. From a prominence one can see torches tossed into the air in surrounding hamlets. Formerly, this was coordinated, for when Kirngu was on the mountain others could see the torch of the ptil and take their cue from it. Now it is difficult for them to know when the ptil has cast his torch in order to throw theirs. None of the others make prayers as they hurl their torches in the air, nor do they have any specific rationale for their doing so However, they are very much pleased by good casts which arch high and burn long, and it seems that to a degree they are regarded as omens too, a method of divination and communication with the mysterious forces which rule the affairs of this world.

After the torch throwing men begin to gather in the pathla and dance dzugwa-dzugwa, a dance reserved for men which they do particularly at the funerals of old or important men. The men are also dressed in much the same way as when they attend an important funeral and other activities of the morning are reminiscent of such funerals. It should be noted that such funerals are not sad occasions--except for the immediate family; they are regarded as festive times and everyone enjoys seeing those great dances of the men. As the men dance, they carry spears. Everyone who has a shield brings it with him. These shields are made of water buffalo hide and are perhaps the most prized material possession of Margi men. Many of the men hold their shields in front of them and with their spears raised to the ready charge into the night or occasionally at each other in mock combat. This, too, is a custom practiced at important funerals. When not holding their shields, they prop them in a line to show the strength, prowess,

and virility of the hamlet. At Kirngu they are lined along the wall of Ptil's compound to be admired by all.

During the dancing, Ptil sits to the right of the entrance to his compound wearing his pizhi and the hyrax cape and holding his own shield before him. In his hand he holds a sickle. Beside him is an unused torch and on the ground is a strange smoking pipe with tobacco. The bowl of the pipe is shallow and the stem nearly as large in diameter as the bowl. These items are not used and like other paraphernalia of the ptil their significance is not explicitly known. If it rains, the men will hold their shields over the ptil to keep him dry for he must hold his position until the morning's activities are completed.

A few women are present and ululate frequently to encourage the men in their dancing and charges. In general women play no ritual roles in Yawal, although they cook the food and brew the mpadlu and psu. Women who attend or observe the events stand as spectators and many stay in their compounds cooking and doing household chores. There are also a good many children who watch in amazement at the uninhibited actions of the men. Some pick up expired torches, re-light them and throw them. Some groups of men from neighboring hamlets come singing and charging into Kirngu to honor the ptil, but on the whole this is an event to be celebrated by each hamlet independently, although none celebrate it with quite the style and enthusiasm of the royal hamlet

As dawn comes the numbers of men participating increases until virtually all men of the hamlet are present. I counted more than two dozen shields along the royal compound at one point. The light permits more independent activity and seems to encourage the men to show off their talents. Soon they divide into battle groups with spearmen who have shields in the front

ranks while in the rear are those without spears and carrying bows from which they simulate shooting arrows. In 1960, they divided into two groups of approximately equal size and stalked each other until they were at a range of approximately ten yards when they let fly with sorghum stalk "spears." With their shields they fended off attacks and then retrieved stalks to throw again. When the lines of battle got too close to continue the throwing, they lowered their shields and raised their spears in a cheering salute. This was greatly enjoyed and they talked about it animatedly for sometime thereafter, displaying marks on shields where they had warded off spears or showing torn garments that had caught them. Ptil Yarkur, who had particularly enjoyed the confrontation, then proceeded to demonstrate the best war form. He crouched with his spear raised high and shield in front and advanced with exaggerated step, knees raised high in a spraddle-legged gait. This was much appreciated and there was a lot of good natured kidding and laughter. Ptil then encouraged a new battle between the old men and the young. The senior men were led by sons of Wampana,[3] and a battle royal followed, still good natured but perhaps a little more intense. The elders claimed victory and, in fact, did seem to get the better of their younger opponents. It should be remembered that many of the older men had fought in skirmishes against the Fulani in the first quarter of the century and some had engaged in raids against other Margi villages. One of the more prominent of the warriors was Wancina, the mafa, whose shield bore patches from real spear thrusts.

Following the mock battles, the youths of the royal clan engage in one of the most telling symbolic acts of Yawal The boys of the Gidum clan, who in a few weeks would begin dukwa, a

[3] The oldest surviving son was not present. It was a difficult point but he obviously was impotent and no longer regarded seriously as a leader.

ceremony which marks their entrance into manhood, take a drum and withdraw from the hamlet. Ptil gives his own spear and shield to the boy of the highest rank among them who will be their leader. In a short time the youths reappear, coming down the path into the pathla They all carry stalk spears and are singing a battle song. They are met at the edge of the pathla by the thlifu and Zuli Dagu who give them food sent by the ptil. They are treated respectfully and requested to return to their homes, but in a brazen display of "arrogance[1]' they eat the food--without thanks--and attack the adult men of the hamlet who crouch behind their shields along the wall of the royal compound. The stalk spears are thrown, but the men, in mock fear, do not return the volley. The boys have thus insulted the ptil and bested their superiors. It is the first of many symbolic acts of rebellion in which they will be engaged over the coming month, but this one, occurring as it does in Yawal, again reinforces the theme of virility and strength overcoming weakness, in addition to its symbolism with regard to the youths' initiation ceremony.

Before adjourning to their compounds the men once more dance and sing. This was the most moving demonstration I saw. Perhaps the greatest of the men's dance songs is wazawaza; it is reserved for the most important occasion or the funerals of the most respected men. On this morning the men of Kirngu danced this without drum accompaniment, only their bare feet shuffling on the packed earth kept time. The oldest man present sang and the dancers kept in a tight circle about him. The act seemed to lift their spirits and they did it three times as though unwilling to let the moment pass. Finally, they danced dzugwa-dzugwa a few more times and the men began to return to their compounds for much needed rest. As they enter their compounds they leave their shields to the right of the entrance and after they have eaten they place their empty bowls in front of the shields.

Just as the men begin to retire to their compounds, the ptil, who remains a spectator at the dance, is brought his meal. Then, in full view of those who remain, he takes a single mouthful of food, swallows it, and retires to his compound to finish the meal and rest. This is the only occasion on which the ptil allows himself to be seen eating.

Although it is mid-morning there are no further ritual activities on this the second day of Yawal. Most of those who got up to throw torches and watch the ptil throw his (in 1960, Ptil lit his torch at approximately 2:30 a. m.) have had very little sleep, and they are exhausted. There is, nevertheless, considerable visiting within the hamlet and with friends and relatives in other hamlets. It is a pleasant experience to walk about one's hamlet and see the shields standing in front of the compounds, proud reminders of past glories and the prestige of one's kinsmen and neighbors. Not all men have shields and most of those in the hamlet have been inherited. There is less practical need for them today and buffalo are increasingly scarce. Among the Higi there are some sheet metal substitutes, quite mistakable from a distance, but these are regarded contemptuously in Gulagu.

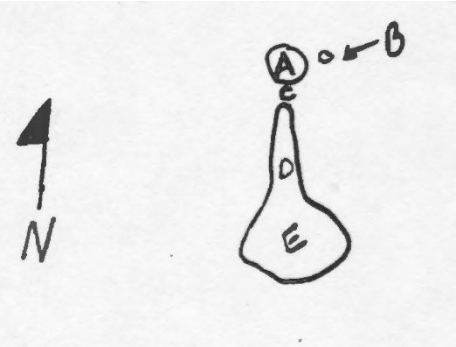
In the afternoon there is a “beer market” and social dancing for those young enough to have recovered from the previous activities. It was at this time that the girls of Kirngu made their appearance in their "European" costumes. Peoples of surrounding societies watched the activities of Yawal with fascination and at the social dancing in 1960 there were a number of Fulani observing and a contingent of perhaps fifteen Matakam. Suddenly, the latter broke into song and dance to the utter fascination of the Margi Itinerant beggars and musicians also descend upon the Margi hamlet to capitalize upon the high spirits and conviviality of these days.

The third day of Yawal is given over completely to feasting, drinking, and social dancing with no significant ritual activities. In 1960 there was a funeral of an old man who lived beyond Kaya, some three and one-half miles away, and virtually all the adult men and many of the women from Kirngu attended. Ptil, who does not attend funerals, remained at home but took part in no social activities. The death was not thought to be particularly significant and in no way cast a pall over the events of Yawal. The fact that the funeral occurred during the celebration undoubtedly meant that it was better attended than it would have been otherwise, and it was fortunate that it could be held on the third day which was without ritual activities.

The fourth and final day is marked by a ritual threshing of sorghum; this occurs in the middle of the growing season and months after the actual threshing has been completed. On the last day of Yawal a few heads of grain saved from the previous harvest are stored in an i'iwa and placed on the east side and at the base of a baobab tree. It is believed that yal are particularly fond of residing in this species of tree. The birma sweeps an area running south from the tree and about fifteen feet beyond it he clears a small circle about two feet in diameter which is a miniature threshing floor (see diagram 9-1).

In the late morning the ptil leads a procession of council members and senior men of the ptilkur to the location and takes his seat under the tree with the others seated on either side along the edges of the cleared land. Others may attend this ceremony if they wish, but few do. After the group is assembled the thlifu takes the sorghum from the i'iwa and places it in a woven head basket especially used for carrying guinea corn in from the fields at harvest. He then places the basket on his head and carries the sorghum to the threshing floor. This is obviously

Diagram 9-1



A. Baobob tree

B. I'iwa with heads of sorghum

C. Ptil's seat

D. Swept land

E. Threshing floor

ceremonial since the small amount of sorghum could more easily be carried by hand the short distance. He reenacts carrying the grain from the fields, but he also carries it from a yal and from the ptil to the threshing floor. There the thlifu and the birma separate heads of sorghum and spread them out.

In the meantime mpadlu has been brought to the ptil and those attending. A servant also brings the three sticks (two of black plum and one of ebony) associated with a threshing. A drum is beat just as at a normal threshing and to the rhythm of the drum the thlifu, birma and ngwoma thresh the grain with miniature replicas of the large sticks used at a regular threshing. When the mpadlu is given to the ptil he pours some at each of his feet and some on the ground in

front of him Previous ptil have drunk the mpadlu, but since Ptil Yarkur gave up drinking fermented beverages when he became ptil, this act is his substitute No one thinks it is inappropriate for in many ways he is identified with the earth and sometimes refers to his ptilkur as i'i giya! “my earth.” He holds court and chats amicably with the spectators who now drink their portions of the mpadlu.

When the threshing is completed and the mpadlu consumed, the procession returns to the royal compound. On the return the ptil comes last, the ngwoma leads the singing of waza-waza, and the thlifu carries the threshed grain to the ptil's principal granary. In a few days the ptil will sacrifice a goat at the granary. Some of the blood will be caught in a gourd and poured over the sorghum inside. A feast will be held for the compound with the meat of the goat.

This miniature threshing marks the end of the Yawal ceremonies. Although that afternoon the ptil and most of the inhabitants make a traditional visit to the hamlet of Humbili, this is not a part of Yawal as such. The threshing is a fitting symbolic end of these fertility rites. It attempts to replicate and foretell a rich harvest from the current crops although it also emphasizes the dependence upon spirits and the ever present relationship between the ptil and the crops of the ptilkur.

The spirit of Yawal persists for a time and the market day following its conclusion in 1960 featured the largest beer market I ever saw, girls came in groups in their Yawal “costume,” and there were numerous ngkyagu with their musical instruments. So large was the assemblage that there were four different dances going on simultaneously for a time.

Harvest celebrations are widespread among Margi, but only at Gulagu and Dluku is it known as Anggarawai. (At Womdi, among the Margi Titum it is called Yawal.) The ceremony

occurs in the eleventh month, it is relatively brief although it requires days of preparation. It occurs near the middle of the month in order to insure that there will be a full moon for social dancing during the night. The Anggarawai follows the cutting of the sorghum and precedes the beginning of threshing, although this injunction is applicable only to kuba, ceremonially the most important sorghum. This is a ceremony centered upon the royal hamlet and involving an established cast of characters; it is not, like Yawal, a family ritual to be celebrated at home. Therefore, it is usually held on a market day so that there will be a crowd and no one need take off a special day to attend the ceremony.

In the late afternoon the crowd collects in the pathla in front of the ptil's compound. There is an ngkyagu drummer and very many women dancers who hold corn stalks aloft as they dance. The dancing is quite vigorous and spontaneous. In groups and sometimes as individuals they dance out along the paths leading to the pathla as they sing over and over again the refrain "anggarawai, anggarawai." The image is that they are coming from the fields singing. Finally, a formal procession is organized; it is led by the birma who carries a sword and has a basket on his head. In the basket is a small bundle of grass called kwatu, three heads of sorghum--one each of kuba, jerama, and mamzigu, a small broken gourd, and Ptil's ceremonial sickle. Behind the birma walks the ptil's senior wife, the thladawa, dressed as though she were a maiden. She is heavily laden with necklaces of beads, wears a beaded girdle, and is covered with red ochre. She is dressed as though she were a virgin bride, a mala mba, going to her fiancé's compound to begin the mba ceremony. Trailing behind and partially surrounding her come the dancing and singing women with the drummer. Prominent in this group and dancing closest to the thladawa

are young mothers with their infants on their backs. The procession comes into the pathla along several paths from the fields.

Each time it parades up to the ptil and salutes him as he watches the events seated to the right of the entrance to his compound. The objects in the head basket will be placed with the ptil's grains. However, these heads of sorghum will not be threshed with the rest of his grain; instead they will be taken to the baobob tree and stored in an i'iwa to await threshing on the last day of the next Yawal as previously described. The ceremony at Dluku differs only in two respects; the procession is led by a young son of the ptil instead of the birma and the ptil, on horseback, is at the rear of the procession from the fields.

At Anggarawai men are restricted to being spectators, not even participating in the dancing. This is a reversal of the pattern at Yawal, but there is one difference in that women at Yawal were casual spectators, while at Anggarawai the men constitute an avid audience. This is a ceremony which emphasizes the fruits of labor and women are thought to be intrinsically fruitful. Yet through it all there is the acknowledgment of the male's role, for as the fruits of the field and the fruits of the women are brought into the hamlet to be presented to the symbol of society, the ptil; so too is a “virgin,” the thladawa so dressed, to begin the cycle again. Similarly, the grain which is presented to him will be reserved for the next Yawal, linking the two agricultural years.

Following the Anggarawai, there is social dancing in the beer market. There is always such a market following the regular Wednesday market and if there is a full moon the dancing usually lasts into the night. On this occasion, however, it is a particularly festive affair since the crowd is unusually large.

The third calendrical ceremony is even briefer though it is attended by a larger crowd. It is the Digu Digal (digu, threshing; digal, large). It is the final threshing of the harvest season and the end of the agricultural cycle. I have chosen to discuss it last although it is traditionally held in the first month which is sometimes called Hya Digu Ptil (the moon of the ptil's threshing). As we have noted it was actually held early in the second month in 1960, for it seems that its occurrence should come after the first rains of the year and none fell during the first month of that year. The convergence of the final threshing and the rains closes the annual cycle. In fact, it creates a degree of overlap, since most men are careful to have their grain threshed and into their granaries before the rains which could cause it to rot. The ptil 5 grain is not in danger, however, since a single rain is unlikely to cause trouble, especially when the season is still relatively dry and the moisture will quickly evaporate.

Despite the name of the ceremony, it is not associated with the threshing of ptil[1]s grain as such. That is done routinely on the morning of the ritual. The greater portion of the ptil's sorghum has long since been threshed and all that remains is a relatively small pile of kuba which is threshed by his wives. It has been kept at a separate threshing floor enclosed by mats; in it are also the items carried in the basket by the birma at anggarawai which will be returned to the i'iwa for storage. This particular threshing is done without any of the customs which accompany other threshings.

In the afternoon a very large crowd, mostly men, gathers in the pathla. It is so large that traders sometimes set up tables to sell small items. The ptil dressed in his finest robes and wearing an elaborate turban sits under a great tree on a very fine goat skin and chats amiably with those who come up to greet him. This style of dress is in marked contrast to the traditional

garb at Yawal. Greetings are very formal and humble; lesser persons do not even greet him. As the time for the ceremony approaches, the ptil moves to a chair[4] at the right of the entrance to his compound. The goat skin is placed under his feet and the senior men move to sit around him once again. When it is judged that the crowd has reached its peak, the royal verge, the mbari, is brought and with his council the ptil moves to a spot on the outskirts of the hamlet, where he once more is seated on the skin under a tree. Then the men present, wearing their finest clothes and carrying spears and other weapons move from the pathla to "bring him back" to the hamlet. Holding their weapons and staffs high they return to the pathla singing the waza-waza; the ptil, carrying the verge, follows the men. No one is allowed to be behind him; even the spectators--anthropological or otherwise--must precede him as he moves into the pathla There he returns to his seat and the men begin to dance the dzugwa-dzugwa to the encouragement of the crowd. The dancing is spirited and moving. Some hunters who have guns fire them off into the air and a few horsemen ride up to salute the ptil in the manner of a Fulani Durba. This ends the formal aspect of Digu Digal.

When Ptil moves into his compound, the men[1]s dancing ends and they collect in small groups to gossip and drink mpadlu. The young men and girls in the crowd may then begin their social dancing, which will last into the night. The main ritual aspects of the Digu Digal are brief and attended by only a small part of the ptilkur, but it is also a major social event marking the end of the agricultural cycle. It is, however, largely a men's ceremony, for it is they who take the greatest pride in a rich harvest.

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[4] The chair was undoubtedly a recent addition to the ceremony in 1960. Pt9l Yarkur found it quite uncomfortable and finally sat on the skin in front of it. This caused some good natured laughter in which he joined.

There are a number of ceremonies which memorialize statuses in the life cycle of Margi. These correspond approximately with birth, naming, male puberty, marriage and death. Some are virtually private, others exceedingly public. The naming ritual is practiced only sporadically; the boy[1] 5 initiation is peculiar to some clans only; and the mba is the sine qua non of being Margi.

Birth is almost a private event and is not publicly recognized for seven days. A midwife assists and buries the afterbirth in a pot called koptu mi behind the mother's home. The neck of the pot is left uncovered and on the morning following the birth the midwife sacrifices a chicken at the partially buried pot. This is the only ritual associated with the actual birth. Although it will be generally known within the hamlet that a child has been born, the act is formally ignored. The child[1]s sex will not be revealed, and if there is another nursing female in the compound she may nurse it for the first seven days.

On the seventh day after the birth of the child there is a ceremony known as zibumbwa (to come out of the house) which marks the birth of the child sociologically. Up to this day, had it died it would have been unceremoniously buried nearby and the birth would never have been mentioned socially. (When it is said that a man has a kwatu of two or three depending upon the sex of his '[1]first[11] child, it means the first child to have zibumbwa, others not being counted.) This [11]delayed[11] birth is another example of Margi attempts to control misfortune. To lose a child is a very unfortunate occurrence; it represents a personal loss and it represents a triumph of misfortune and the forces which plague men. At the same time, it is a common occurrence, for the first days of an infant's life are the most dangerous and it is more likely to die in the first week than in any subsequent week By postponing the "birth" beyond these seven days, they are

able to mask early deaths and lessen, at least publicly, their loss and the victory of sinister forces.[5]

On the day of the zibumbwa, as the name implies, the child is taken from its mother's house and shown in public for the first time. The father of the child must provide a feast for the compound, traditionally the leg of a cow. If this proves too expensive, substitution may be made. At the koptu mi the midwife sacrifices another chicken which is cooked for the mother. According to the sex of the child either two or three pieces of cooked chicken are placed in the koptu The mother is fed as she comes out of the door of her house and is led from the compound carrying a hoe handle. The latter item appears with some frequency in Margi ritual in association with women and doubtless refers to the supportive role of women (the handle supports the blade) and to fertility (the hoe is the instrument of planting). Both the child and its mother are covered with a mixture of red ochre and oil called yinsidu. They are completely covered from head to toe including the clothing of the mother (the child wears none) and will remain so for two or three months. Occasionally one may note a mother and child not covered with yinsidu; this happens in cases where the mother has lost a number of infants in succession and hopes to break the pattern. In another seven days the mother of the child must provide a chicken for the father which he will sacrifice at the koptu bzir as at Yawal.

In the case of the birth of twins the ceremony is substantially altered. They may not be brought out for as much as three months and then there is a very large ceremony to which people come from great distances. It may be that the delay between birth and ceremony is another

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[5] These observations on the uncertainty of infant survival find a parallel in the so-called family insurance plans of industrial societies, for they do not ordinarily extend coverage to infants until they are at least several weeks old.

recognition of the extremely high mortality rate of twins, but more practically the delay permits the relatives and neighbors to make preparations for the lavish ceremony called ful bili (ful, to dance [but not social dance, unsu, or dance at a funeral, ti]; bili, multiple births). Multiple births occur frequently among the Margi. There were two sets of twins born in Kirngu in 1959-60 and at least two other sets in the immediate vicinity. Many men in Kirngu had fathered twins, one had fathered three sets by different wives and two others had fathered two sets y different wives and two others had fathered two sets each. One young woman has given birth to both triplets and twins. Triplets are also said to have been born in two nearby ptilkur and one informant had heard of quadruplets. Mortality rates for multiple births are, of course, much higher than for single births.

Multiple births are recognized as a pinnacle of fertility, but the event is viewed with some ambivalence. Twins are believed to possess special powers and are, therefore, regarded with awe, a view which can vary from the marvelous to the fearful. The fu1 bili is as much to please the twins as to celebrate their birth. Twins provoke feelings of apprehension because of their mysterious potential and perhaps as anticipation of their high mortality rate. As children they are very likely to be spoiled for they must be given the first choice of everything and they are recognized as disciplinary problems. It is said that they might be masakwa, a term which is often used to describe the behavior of illegitimate children who are put to death. They are said to have control over snakes, lizards, and "things"; sometimes it is said that these are in their stomachs. The aged widow of Ptil Wampana told how the twins which she bore were killed by exposure at her husband's command because he, a clairvoyant (salkur), knew that the twins would cause trouble. She accepted his decision without question or reservation. It should also be noted that

missionaries report twin infanticide as being a frequent practice of the Margi Titum. However, despite these ominous attitudes, it is recognized that so long as the twins are pleased they will bring good fortune to the compound. When Ptil Yarkur's senior wife gave birth to twins there was general rejoicing and on several occasions he noted that after he had celebrated the birth of twins with a large ful bili, one of his wives, who had been barren, be-came pregnant. In general among Margi Dzirngu, the birth of twins is a happy event and a ful bili is one of the most festive occasions.

The principal event at a ful bili is the coordinated dancing of groups of girls from neighboring hamlets. Each group is dressed identically, have rattles tied to their legs and dance in a closely spaced line. There is an in-formal competition among the groups for the best costuming and the best dancing. Money is associated vaguely with the ceremony, spectators frequently giving the dancers money. The most spectacular costuming I ever saw featured Nigerian currency tucked into the head bands of one hamlet's dancers. At the height of the dancing the father of the twins, dressed in his pizhi, and the mother, covered with red ochre, appear and show the infants to the assembled crowd. Unlike zibumbwa, fu1 bili are attended by many people from a wide area.

A formal naming custom is known for two clans only – Gidum and Birdling – though others may have similar customs. In both instances when a child is three months old its mother, usually accompanied by a young girl, takes the infant to a well associated with the clan, and there, on a nearby bush, the mother hangs a miniature bow or small female costume--depending upon the sex of the child. In the evening the family shares a special feast. In 1960 this custom

was only occasionally followed, though the bows and costume could be found at the naming places.

Although at Gulagu the royal clan has an elaborate male initiation rite called dukwa, puberty ceremonies are not characteristic of Margi clans. On the other hand, pre-mba activities seem to fulfill the same function. The dukwa takes place in the sixth month, a period of heavy rain and conspicuous growth. Many of its features symbolize fertility and there is a notable element of ritual rebellion. During the first week the initiates, who are usually about fourteen years old, go about naked, a brazen violation of the Margi norm of modesty. They live in seclusion atop Mount Gulak and enjoy numerous contests of skill and status. During this time--and to a lesser extent during the remaining weeks of the month--they are allowed great license. They particularly pick upon unmarried girls by shooting them with grass arrows, and they extort travelers, though this is not permitted to get out of hand. Also during this time they may be initiated into the techniques of sexual intercourse by their female attendants who may be kinswomen. During the week, the initiates become less modest about their nakedness and they are expected to visit their sulku (in-laws)--marriage arrangements having been made before dukwa can take place. Men often boast that they stood naked before their mothers-in-law, but in the year that I observed dukwa, I could not confirm even one such case. A close friend later confided that he had told his father that he had revealed himself before his sulku, but in fact he had not nor did he know anyone who had.

The most striking instance of rebellion occurs on the first day when the initiates come as a body before the ptil, and – as he salutes them – they shoot him with grass arrows. This is reminiscent of their rejection of his food offering at Yawal and their mock attack upon the men

of the clan (p. 249-50).When I observed the attack upon Ptil, he took it good naturedly and encouraged the boys, some of whom were timid; but when one initiate – a generally obstreperous lad – seemed to enter into the act with a bit too much enthusiasm, he was rebuked by an adult male. It was a poignant reminder that this was a ritual event, and that the rest of his life would be lived in obeisance.

During the rest of the month the initiates dress in the old style--pizhi and beads- -and carry a style of "throwing knife" called danisku and ceremonial sickles. At this time the initiates are frequently seen at markets and, in general, seem to parade about. Fathers take great pride in the appearances of their sons and look forward to their dukwa. To an extent the whole clan participates in dukwa and men vicariously relive--and exaggerate--the events of their own initiations. Following the rite the initiates are expected to take on the responsibilities of men, though in practice they seem more willing to attain this goal than their fathers to permit it.

The most widespread Margi rite is the mba (to tie) which was mentioned in passing in Chapter 4. To the question, "Who is a Margi[7]" the most common answer is, "One who does mba." It is, however, a clan ceremony and therefore very variable throughout Margiland. The following features may generally be said to be common (cf. Vaughan 1962):

1) It occurs at one's first marriage, the males at about age 17 and the females a year or so younger. A young woman may do mba with a man who has previously done mba, in which case he only participates in a portion of her ceremony.

2) The bride in every instance and the groom at his first mba cover themselves with a mixture of red ochre and oil (yinsidu) and dress ostentatiously. Frequently each bride wears a brass bell.

3) The couple engage in various acts which symbolize the establishment of a compound and which are intended to promote fertility.

4) Finally, there are always distinctive acts which set off the mba of one clan from that of another.

Among some clans the mba is a group custom, like dukwa, while for most it is rite peculiar to a given couple. Even in the latter case, fathers may try to have the mba of age-mates simultaneously to increase the festivity and publicity of the occasion. The ceremony in the first case and ideally in the second takes place in connection with the agricultural calendar: for some it is when new farms are being prepared and for others it is at the height of the rains.

The red ochre mixture which covers the couple is reminiscent of the custom following the birth of a child, and in fact, the mothers of the couple often cover themselves with the yinsidu also. One element of the costume of the Gidum is unusually striking. For the first two days the groom wears a p9zhi-like garment made of unshorn goatskin. It is called a hamca and is identical in form and name to the garment in which a man is buried. Symbolically the youth dies and is reborn (covered with yinsidu) in marriage.

There is a great deal of feasting during the mba which lasts from one to three months depending upon clan custom. Both families of the couple participate and exchange food at this time. One food, in particular, is associated with mba; it is made of ground sesame (mayi) seed.

These seeds are frequently used as offerings for the well-being of children; they are particularly associated with twins, and mayi is the first crop which is traditionally planted in newly cleared land. It is inescapably associated with fertility. The couple lived together in the groom's father's compound for anywhere from one week to three months depending upon local custom. During this period they conspicuously engage in acts which are symbolic of farming. Following their first night of cohabitation and to a lesser extent throughout this period the bride will be teased about her sexual performance by the zamu of her husband; this is the beginning of their joking relationships.

Among some Margi Titum a curious variation on cohabitation occurred. There the mala mba was barely pubescent and the sal mba would not have sexual relations with her. Instead he had intercourse with other girls who had done their mba and therefore no longer under the compunction to be virgins. Conception apparently occurred with frequency under these conditions, and since the sal mba of the girls would not take responsibility for children conceived while their mala mba resided in their father' compounds, there was an unusually high rate of infanticide. Children born of such circumstances are known as masakwa and reputed to cause mischief and misfortunes to their compounds. I was told that the government imprisoned 43 men from one area for infanticide, and in a sample of I5 women from a Titum area, I found that they averaged one masakwa each. Although infanticide was still practiced in 1959, it was being suppressed by governmental authorities and Christian converts.

After concluding rites, the bride returns to her home where she stays until her husband is sufficiently established to take on the responsibilities of a family--which probably will not be for several years. Estrangements during this time are very frequent. Occasionally a girl's father may

not wish his daughter to lose interest in the marriage, and he will contrive with a diviner to declare her "ill" and prescribe a psu'a--a one week cohabitation with her sal mba. Even should the couple never cohabit, they always remain sal mba and mala mba to each other, and either will mourn the death of the other as that of a spouse.

The rituals most frequently seen are funerals, both because death rates are high and because funerals are major social events. Quite likely there are psychological reasons for attending funerals where one's own vulnerability is inescapable, but there are important sociological reasons as well. Funerals, much like weddings, bring together groups and individuals who have been significant in the life of the deceased. Lineal, matrilateral, and affinal kin all have specific roles in a funeral. Thereby they acknowledge the social ties among them which had its locus in the deceased, and they celebrate the change- -not the dissolution-of those relationships. For a funeral does not so much mark the end of an individual 5 existence, as a transition to the status of ancestor. Terminologically, at least, the transition is not a radical one, as the word for ancestor is the same word used for "grandparent" and the general term used to refer to all persons of status and age.

Nor is the occasion a sad one for any beyond the immediate family, if the individual has lived a full life, but the fact that Margi dance and sing at funerals should not be misinterpreted. The appropriate verb for both of these acts is ti which is distinguished from the other verbs meaning to dance or to sing socially, and ti also means to cry.

The ngkyagu prepare the corpse, dig the grave, and transport the body to the burial grounds. A male corpse is sewn into a hamca; then the body is bound in corn stalks like splints so that it will sit erect; and finally it is clothed in gowns and the mouth and other orifices

covered. An ngkyagu places the corpse on his shoulders and dances among the mourners before taking it to the clan burial ground. There it is placed in a flagon shaped grave in a flexed position, lying on its right side, right hand under its head. If the deceased is a female, she is carried in a litter rather than on shoulders.

A concluding rite is celebrated anywhere from seven to eleven days later, depending upon the status of the individual- -except that for a ptil it will be as soon as possible not to prolong the interregnum. At this time the grave is built to its cylindrical shape and the deceased's ijju kir (if a male) is impaled on a stone atop the grave. The pot in which a woman kept flour is placed on her grave.

A final meal is had by the mourners and an offering is left along a nearby path. On the next day, the inheritance is settled and, if the deceased had wives, they indicate with whom they will reside in leviratic marriages.

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In the descriptions above I am acutely aware that very many details have been omitted. In part this is a practical consideration; ceremonies which last for days or even for hours inevitably involve more than can be conveniently included in written descriptions. But there is another important reason; as we have mentioned previously, rituals vary greatly from occasion to occasion, and oral descriptions and actual performances may differ significantly. During Dukwa, Ptil informed me that the initiates had "forgotten" to pile their danisku in a certain pattern, and he added that he used to give each of them an iron token but this custom had been dropped from the ritual for unspecified reasons. The constant prompting of performers by spectators--many of

whom disagree among themselves--also implies that standards are neither widely known nor agreed upon.

All of this suggests something about Margi ritual which is either unusual or frequently unreported for African societies: their rituals are poorly integrated with little or no unifying rationale. There is little conscious understanding of ritual ~ their importance may be felt but their meanings are not comprehended. Rituals have an importance which seems based more upon tradition or in the performances themselves than in overt symbolism.

There are several characteristics of Margi ritual which indicate that their ceremonial life is very vulnerable to change. First, the lack of integration and conscious rationale to the rituals removes opposition to change and affords an opportunity for more "meaningful" substitutions Secondly, the tradition of individual and regional variability has the effect of sanctioning new practices including perhaps non-practice. Finally, the centrality of the ptil in all of the public rituals makes them extremely vulnerable to political changes.

PART III

Chapter 10

Change in Margie Society: A Personal View

The distinction between social change as evolution and social change as history has posed problems for anthropology since its inception. (By the former, I refer to the general pattern in change and by the latter the details of particular change.) One way of viewing the classical functionalists' avoidance of these topics is to realize the dilemma they faced. Their intimate knowledge of life as it is lived in other societies caused them to reject the broad and facile conclusions of cultural evolutionists, but as committed scientists, intend upon discovering pattern and rule in behavior, they did not write histories.

I admit that I feel the functionalist dilemma; my goals are those of a social scientist and a generalist, but I am an ethnographer involved in and concerned with the lives of my informants. I have, in the course of this ethnography, generalized from the details of their lives, yet I am uncomfortable with any discussion, particularly one of change, which leaves out the realities of living in a changing society. In this chapter I hope to combine descriptions of the warp of change in Margi society with the weft of change in Margi lives.

In other chapters I have noted that changes have occurred in Margi society, but here I wish to amplify those remarks and place them in the context of the life of one individual. The view is personal in that sense, but it is also personal to me in that my perceptions and my reactions are consciously involved herein.

There were two schools which the children of Kirngu attended in 1959-60. One at Kaya, some three and one-half miles away, was run by Roman Catholic missionaries, and though no fees were charged, few from Kirngu attended be-cause of the distance--though the only girls

from the hamlet to attend school were enrolled there. The second school was the Gulak school of the Church of the Brethren which was only a mile away. Each year the Gulak school would enroll a number of Kirngu boys but as the deadline for the fees came and passed all but two or three dropped out. It was not a matter of money so much as the low priority which the inhabitants of Kirngu placed on schooling at that time. This does not mean that the school was poorly attended. Those in other hamlets did value education, particularly those converted to Christianity or those sympathetic to it.)

Each day these sometimes-students from Kirngu would pass our compound and greet me:

"Good.“

“Morning.”

“Sir."

Each word was as distinct as an item on a list, and it mattered not the time of day – the greeting was the same. Except for one boy.

He was about twelve years old, tall for his age, and seemingly very shy. He would extend his arms downward, palms together, bow very slightly at the waist, and quietly greet me in a manner which clearly indicated a comprehension of English, however rudimentary. His face was thin, his eyes often averted; although a faint smile often played upon his lips, he was more reserved than his antic schoolmates. Whereas the other boys would pass on, he frequently lagged behind to speak, to offer help, or merely to watch us and our strange ways. He was a continuing student in Primary Class III.

His name was Wampana, the eldest son of the eldest son of Ptil Simnda, who was the eldest son of Ptil Wagla, who was the eldest son of the famous Ptil Wampana, after whom the

boy was named. He soon became a favorite with us and particularly with our three year old son, who would wait by the path for Wampana to return from school. Such was our son's devotion that he also came to be known by the name Wampana.

Wampana's father was a wealthy man who fully understood the potential of education as a status indicator if not as an intellectual force. He had completed four years of school himself, reputedly the first person from the royal hamlet to attend school. He was an intensely ambitious individual; he made several ventures into politics and held several relatively minor offices. Opportunistic, materialistic, he was friendly to the point of being forward, and, withal, exasperatingly likable. He was very interested in modernization, openly proud, and passionate; he often revealed himself to be an atypical Margi His love for Wampana and his pride in the boy's achievements were apparent.

Wampana's mother was a quiet, very traditional woman. Her values, unlike her husband's were conservative. For many years Wampana was her only child and her gently ways greatly influenced him. Not that he grew to be a traditionalist, but through her he learned to respect traditionalism. Her modesty and lack of ostentation, despite her husband's wealth, became her son's traits. She approved of his education without understanding what it was when he became a Christian, she continued to press him to follow Margi custom without recognizing any contradiction. Even after he was an adult, his attachment to her was strong, and she continued to urge him to follow the old ways--largely without success. Wampana described her as "a tough-hearted woman", a person who could scold him even after he had become a prosperous adult and make tears come to his eyes, but he added quickly, "I love her."

Wampana's attendance at the Gulak school had been at his father's instigation, an act

which showed some courage as Ptil Simnda had told him, "If you send your son to school, he will no longer be your son," a reference to the effects of education upon filial loyalty. This reasoning had led to the termination of the father's education.

Wampana was an apt student and had the good fortune to come under the influence of a remarkable and talented teacher, who was, at that time, very likely the best educated Margi Dzirngu. He was unusual for his interest in local history and custom, and he was unique in admiring the accomplishments of traditionalists rather than feeling superior to them. Yet he was not an anachronist, he could see the future and he was firmly committed to a more modern lifestyle, but he alone of Margi I then knew could see the continuity in change. He tried to transmit his respect for Margi culture and his orientation to the future to his students. In the case of Wampana, at least, he was successful.

By the early 1960's Wampana was old enough to do dukwa, the male initiation rite of the Gidum clan (p. 363-264). However, his interest in Margi traditional customs was more academic than participatory, and he was reluctant to follow what he considered a pagan custom even though there were no church injunctions against it. He was also very bothered by the dominant role which his father had in the choice of his wife, who would participate in the ceremony with him. He tried to avoid the custom altogether, but his father's influence could not be denied; next he tried to argue that he should go through the rite without a wife, again to no avail. In the meantime, he had somewhat outgrown the cohort with whom he would have to do dukwa.[1] Thus in 1964, at seventeen, embarrassed to be grouped with boys his junior, he completed his initiation. In retrospect he talked with enthusiasm and humor of the rite, confessing that he never

[1] The average age of initiates decreased as more young men attended school.

appeared naked before his wife's mother though he told his father that he had. He laughed as he realized that both the failure and the lie were modal behaviors for Margi youths. His mala mba was an attractive girl whose prosperous father was a political ally of his own father. This was the last full-fledged dukwa for the Gidum boys of Gulagu.

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Shortly after Wampana's participation in the pagan ritual the Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahamadu Bello, Premier of the Northern Region, the most powerful person in Nigerian politics, and a Fulani, visited the province with the expressed goal of converting pagans to Islam.

The success of the Sardauna's visit, which had far-reaching consequences for all Margi Dzirngu seemed highly improbable, given Margi hostility toward the Muslim Fulani. Paradoxically, the conversions were made possible by a singularly anti-Fulani event some years earlier.

Although Madagali District had been administered as though it were a part of Northern Nigeria and Adamawa Province since 1922, it was technically a part of the British Northern Cameroons and a Trust Territory. In 1959, the United Nations held a plebiscite at which the people were asked the following questions:

(a) Do you wish the Northern Cameroons to be part of the Northern Region of Nigeria when the Federation becomes independent on 1 October 1960?

(b) Are you in favor of deciding the future of the Northern Cameroons at a later date?

The administrators knew very little about local conditions, and they expected that the

vote would be overwhelmingly for the first choice. There was, however, throughout the British Cameroons--both Northern and Southern---considerable opposition to administrations which they felt to be imposed upon them. In the south the opposition was primarily directed against the Ibo, in the extreme north against the Kanuri, and in the central area the opposition was to the Fulani of Adamawa. In Gulagu the opposition was even more specific in being focused against the Fulani of Madagali and the descendants of Hamman Yaji, their oppressor until 1927. The British were seen as a benign force who protected the indigenous people from the excesses of the Fulani. Although this had been the case in the final days of Hamman Yaji, subsequently the British had solidified and strengthened Fulani rule.

It is important to realize that in traditional Margi language there is no word for either Islam or Muslim; Islam did not exist as an abstraction. Instead, it existed as an intrinsic characteristic of the only Muslims they had ever known, the Fulani. There is only one word, plesar, which means both Fulani and Islam. Thus Fulani, Adamawa, Northern Nigeria, and Islam were all merged into a single entity. An essentially political emotion – rejection of Fulani re-pression and rule--was indistinguishable from religious emotions – anti-Islamic feelings. While it is correct to say that Margi were anti-Muslim because that is literally what they said, it is important to understand that the basis of their hostility was not directed at Islam, per se, but at the only representatives of Islam they had known, the politically repressive local Fulani.

The verdict to remain under the United Nations was not only unexpected, it was unacceptable; and so a second plebiscite in which the choices would be between joining Nigeria or the Federal Republic of Cameroon which was scheduled for early 1961. In the meantime, Nigeria, which had been severely embarrassed by the first outcome, promised very substantial

reforms in local rule. For example, people in the Madagali area were promised that, should they decide to join Nigeria in the second plebiscite, they would no longer be administered as part of Adamawa Province, but be instead a district in a new province. The vote in the second plebiscite was for Nigeria by a 60 to 40 margin; the vote in Madagali District was also to join Nigeria though by a somewhat narrower margin. (For a fuller account of these events see Vaughan 1964a.)

The significance of these events for the Sardauna's triumphant visit in 1964 was that the second plebiscite had effectively removed the Fulani as a major political force in the area. In fact, when the Sardauna visited, the District Head was a Christian who was a member of one of the smaller ethnic groups, the Wogga. Thus, it was then possible for Margi to distinguish between Islam and the oppressor.

There was, however, still a political dimension to Islam, in that the government of Northern Nigeria was firmly in the hands of Muslims, and sooner or later local governmental officials encountered Muslim superiors. In addition, a broader regional and national awareness was steadily growing among those in government, and Islam as well as Christianity offered a wider, less provincial orientation. Finally, add the Sardauna's undoubtedly charismatic personality and it is small wonder that one village head after another converted. He personally visited Kirngu and succeeded in converting Ptil Yarkur, who changed his name to Damburam (by which he will be called in the remainder of this chapter).[1a]

[1a] The proselytizing in the former Northern Cameroons was, in fact, a part of widespread efforts to convert pagans to Islam which followed Nigerian independence (for example, see Tseayo 1975). This may have been related to the fact that Christians recruited and electoral contests often turned on Muslim vs. Christian interests. However, from the Margi perspective, the Sardauna's visit was unique. They did not convert as a part of a popular movement; their conversions represented difficult personal decisions made, despite historical precedent, out of conviction and in hope of brighter future.

The conversions were generally limited to those in government, their kin, and those who aspired to governmental careers. In Kirngu, renamed Jalingo, about two-thirds converted, but this greatly exceeded the number in any other hamlet of Gulagu. Although Islam has become an acceptable option for modernizing Margi, its numbers are relatively few, probably not exceeding 7% of the total Margi population.

I am aware that I have explained the conversions in political terms and even though I feel sure that at one level village heads were aware of the "survival value" of their behavior, it would be inaccurate and unkind to imply that the actual conversions were insincere. Whatever the forces at work, most converts have proven to be devout Muslims.[2]

But as the foundations of the conversions were political, so were the primary consequences. The entire system of divine kingship at Gulagu was doomed, for with his conversion Damburam refused to participate in pagan rituals of kingship. This destroyed the kingdom's public ritual life and seriously undermined traditional religion even for the approximately 85% of the society who at that time were neither Muslim nor Christian. Damburam attempted to shift the king's role in the rituals to his father's brother, the most senior non-Muslim in the royal clan, but the move largely failed and much public ritual disappeared.

The inability to transfer the central role in the public rituals was very revealing. The rituals validated the political office, thus the office is central to them; to make the role non-political, which was the effect of appointing his father's brother to officiate, made the rituals, in part, pointless. In 1974, Damburam asked if I would like for the kingdom to celebrate anggarawai again, and he let it be known that on the appropriate day there would be anggarawai.

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[2] Damburam sent away all but four wives, but after a time he decided that he was not so devout and took back those who wished to return. In 1973, he had seven wives, but in subsequent years he reverted to four again.

Since he would not officiate he designated in his stead the nearest descendant of the late thlifu. But this too was a failure, for although everyone came with great eagerness, nothing happened. In the same year the Anggarawai at Dluku was also a failure for lack of a ptil. In that case, Pti1 Dluku was recently deceased and the government had not accepted a successor. Again everyone came, but nothing happened. These cases not only demonstrate the interrelationship between the ritual and the office, they speak to the ideological basis of divine kingship.

The conversion of the ptil changed more than the ritual and religious life of the community. Since the rituals validated the office of ptil, they legitimized his authority. He held power because he was ritually sanctioned to do so. Of course, by this period the office was also legitimized by other levels of government, but in a secular sense only. The ultimate result of the conversion was a loss of dimension to the office. In effect Damburam ceased to be a ptil and became a village head; he gave up his culturally sanctioned authority in a Margi political system-- encapsulated though it was--to become a link in a larger bureaucratic chain. Not surprisingly, the traditional council ceased to function altogether, and no vacancies have been filled.

The changes were puzzling and upsetting to traditionalists and in former times one can well imagine that this would have been an opportune moment to stage a thlida. But times had changed; and to be complete all of the logical rivals had also converted. It is undeniable, too, that Damburam had been in office so long and was so respected that his personal influence was still considerable; he was easily the most respected village head in the District. In acknowledgment of this he had been appointed Assistant District Head, despite the fact that he was illiterate and did not even speak Hausa which had become the principal language of government at the district level

Another erosion of traditional power followed the reorganization of the court system. Instead of the dual system previously described, since the 1960's there had been a unified system with courts presided over by trained legal officials and assisted, when necessary, by advisors in traditional law. In Gulak there were two such courts, neither presided over by a Margi, although one of the advisors on traditional law was a Margi from the royal clan. These courts function well and judgments seem not substantially different from former times, but the critical fact remains that the pti1 was no longer the arbiter of disputes and consequently suffered a significant loss of power and a significant loss of contact with the people.

After the United Nations plebiscites of 1959 and 1961, Nigerian politics was of little interest to most Margi Dzirngu because it so little affected their lives, although they lived in an area which was repeatedly reassigned administratively. Originally a part of Adamawa Province, they were next in Sardauna Province, then North Eastern State, and finally Gongola State. In fact none of these changes or even the coups and counter coups at the national level significantly affected daily life.

It remained for the reforms of 1976, which essentially eliminated the authority of traditional government while retaining its forms, and the elections of 1979 to alter substantially the political horizons of the Margi of Madagali District.

At the local level political affairs had been run by pagans, pagans-turned Muslim, or by traditional Fulani leaders whose positions were either hereditary or appointed by higher authority which was Muslim. For all practical purposes there were no popularly elected officials. The dominance of Islam in the political sphere was so complete and of such long standing that one might well forget that Muslims were a distinct minority in both the Mandara area and within

Gongola State, the boundaries of which very nearly replicated the old Adamawa Province. So congruent were these areas that some feared a return to the Fulani domination which had characterized former times[3] , but the political power of the non-Muslim majority was revealed in the elections of 1979.

It must be emphasized that as a result of extensive Christian missionary schools the proportion of educated potential leaders who were Christian was very high. For example, in the election for State Senator from Gulak, the candidates were an un-schooled Muslim and a former school teacher from the local school which had been founded by Christian missionaries. The pagans who were the largest voting block in the Dzirngu area and probably the largest in the state, tended to support Christian candidates not only because of the pagans' traditional fear of Islam cum Fulani, but because they were often the better qualified candidates. In the end, Christians captured two-thirds of the seats in the Gongola legislature, including Bulama Birdling, the former school teacher from Gulak mentioned above and Wampana's teacher. In addition, Bitrus Kajel, another Margi Christian from Gulak, was elected to the national assembly as Senator from Mubi Division of which Madagali District is a part.

The effect of all this upon Damburam was interesting. His conversion to Islam was sincere and his commitment to the larger governmental orientation showed a remarkable political flexibility and acumen in one of his age and background. As Assistant District Head he might be thought to have greater power than ever before, certainly he had authority over a wider

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[3] So strong was this concern that Margi other than the Dzirngu successfully fought inclusion in Gongola State and became a part of Borno. The reason the Dzirngu did not join them is unclear, but it must be remembered that virtually all of their political leaders had converted to Islam and at this time they believed that their old enmity with the Fulani was irrelevant. The non-Dzirngu Margi, whose homeland was outside the old boundaries of Northern Cameroons, had not received the special proselytizing effort of 1964 and they still regarded the Fulani and Yola with suspicion.

geographic area. But, withal, he was not a happy man. In 1973-74 and in 1981, he often confided in me his displeasure with the younger generation who seemed never to respect their elders and who behaved so improvidently. He frequently spoke of the last British District Officer, Derek Mountain, and of how much better those times were. Although he was a man committed to the future, he longed for the values of a former time. He saw none of his unease as being related to his conversion to Islam. He seemed not so much a man who had outlived his times, as one who had moved into another society without realizing it and longed to return home.

Forbidden to participate in electoral politics by the reforms of 1976, Damburam was frustrated with the approach of the 1979 elections. Finally he could no longer remain out of the battle and he openly supported candidates of the National Party of Nigeria CNPN), a conservative, Muslim dominated party closely linked to the old Northern Peoples Congress (NPC), the party of the late Sardauna Ahmadu Bello. Damburam recognized this to be the party of tradition, and much more accurately than others he saw that the Christian candidates of the Greater Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) were candidates of reform. His candidates lost, and in 1980 he was deposed, ostensibly because of his age (he was born in 1902) but most believed it was a result of his political activism on the losing side. In 1981 he was still fighting the ouster and no permanent replacement had been made, though few thought he could win. It was obvious that the fires of political competition still raged in this man not only from another generation but, to a considerable extent, from another cultural world.

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When the Sardauna made his proselytizing tour in 1964, among those converted in Jalingo was, predictably, Wampana's father. When Wampana returned from school, his father

pleaded with him to convert also, even going so far as to have important Muslims from as far away as Mubi come to talk to him. But Wampana's Christianity was unshakable, and for a time relations between father and son were strained. Wampana's mother also refused to convert and moved out of her husband's compound, declaring herself to be a malabjagu. In time, Wampana's father came to accept his son's dedication and a degree of normality returned to their relations, though Wampana never again lived in his father[1]s compound or in Kirngu/Jalingo.

In 1969, Wampana graduated from Teachers' Training College and was posted to the Gulak Primary School. In the same year he completed his marriage, and within another year his first child was born, a son. However, the couple soon began to have serious domestic problems which were exacerbated when his wife's father took Wampana to court in a vain attempt to get more bridewealth from him. In early 1973, his wife returned to her father's compound and in Margi terms they were divorced, except that there might be some negotiation concerning partial return of bridewealth since there had been but one child. Wampana immediately married another woman, a Christian who worked at the Mission Station. Remarriage after divorce is not disapproved by the church, and, as we have seen, it is normal among traditionalists. However, things were not to remain simple in Wampana's life; the first wife discovered that she was pregnant and wanted to return. Wampana's father told him that unless he took her back, "You are no son of mine,"[4] and Wampana himself felt a moral obligation to her. Despite these pressures, Wampana's love for his new wife, an unusually attractive woman, was too strong to permit him to divorce her, and as a Christian he should not have two wives. He was placed in an unusually

[4] This is a puzzling warning. There would be no complications under Margi custom; the child would be Wampana 's and come to his compound at an appropriate age. The circumstances were not unusual. Nor was Wampana's father's relationship with the wife's father so important as to explain his admonition.

difficult position; although polygyny is very common in Margi society, unlike divorce it was not sanctioned by the local church. The first wife returned, Wampana remained married to the second, and he found himself a polygynist without ever intending to be one. He was condemned publicly in church and the office of treasurer was taken from him. There is some confusion as to whether he was stripped of his church membership; he said he had been, but the local European missionary denied it. It is possible that the missionary did not know of all the actions of the congregation, and it is equally possible that Wampana considered the censure tantamount to dismissal. In either event, he felt an outcast and no longer attended church.

Although Wampana was hurt and humiliated, in the following months he proved both his conviction and sincerity by being a good husband to two wives and remaining a committed Christian. He said, "Jesus Christ is my personal savior, and no man can change that." He told me this with the full knowledge that I was incorrigibly pro-pagan, no matter how I otherwise disguised my sentiments.

His first wife gave birth to triplets, one of whom died, and the family settled into an uneasy pattern of which Wampana said, "Now there are two (wives) with me; I do not know what to do. I must buy everything in pairs." The situation was more similar to traditional domestic life than Wampana thought, though in one important respect there was a difference; Wampana was, as a school teacher, a prosperous man and his infatuation for his second wife frequently got him into situations in which he had to buy not only two but two rather expensive gifts. His father thought his behavior was silly and unwise, and they often quarreled about it.[5]

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[5] In 1961, Wampana 's father had been involved in a case in which his favorite wife had been accused of witchcraft. Instead of remaining aloof as other mature men did, he became personally involved, and thereby earned the ridicule of others as a man who was led by his passion for a wife.

Although Wampana kept his teaching position, the schools having been placed under the government some years earlier, his social relations were either limited or constrained; he lived his life much as a man without a society. He was not at home among pagan traditionalists, Christians, or Muslims.

It was at this point that my family and I once more came into Wampana's life. (I had, however, spent a day with him in 1971.) I have no doubt that we were doubly welcome, not only as old acquaintances but as a diversion from his problems In the following months Wampana almost became a part of our family, though he maintained his own household and continued his teaching profession.

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Dramatic changes in both the national and local economies were apparent when we returned in 1973 and even more pronounced in 1981 There was irrefutable evidence of a higher standard of living, improved health care, and greater prosperity in general. The local market was substantially larger and held on two days of the week. The dispensary was greatly expanded and by 1981 it was being operated by the government and had been supplemented by a second dispensary in the town of Gulak. It was apparent that the general standard of living was substantially higher than in 1959-60, but by 1981 the extremes between the wealthy and the poor were much greater than anything I had seen on previous visits.

The areas which showed the most conspicuous prosperity were the town of Gulak, the several areas of missionary investment, and along the newly paved road. To a large extent this development and its spatial distribution reflected the general Nigerian trend toward increased governmental payrolls and services, greater church investment in secular activities, and

improved transportation facilities.

A very important source of income and one more widely distributed to the population was military pay and pensions. Many Margi enlisted in the Army during the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70, twenty-six from Kirngu, and most remained in the military well into the 1970's. During their service each received an allotment which was sent to his home. Several soldiers had very substantial homes built for themselves or their families. After the war, some of the soldiers took wives to their stations (polygynists usually rotated wives) and this added greatly to the experiences of females who otherwise rarely traveled far. On one occasion, I heard one of these women tell others of the wonders of electricity, running water, and multistoried buildings. Even after demobilization, several soldiers received pensions which exceeded their cash requirements. The result was a substantial infusion of cash into the local economy.

The influx of cash seems largely responsible for a marked increase in cattle holding among the Dzirngu. They have long recognized ownership of cattle as a way of investing money with a probability of safety and profit. In 1960, I knew a woman who bought an unborn calf for a very low price, accepting the risks of its survival and of its sex and hoping to sell at a high profit. But in those days few Margi had enough cash to invest and virtually none knew enough about herding to care for their own cattle. The few who owned cattle placed them with local Fulani herds at a high cost. As more cash has come into the economy, greater numbers of Margi have bought cattle and learned to maintain their own herds. Whereas, in 1959-60 I knew no one who kept cattle, in 1981 five of my acquaintances had cattle in their compounds and many more owned cattle which were tended by others in a cooperative arrangement or were placed with Fulani in the old fashion. It is important to add that these herds were primarily regarded

passively as repositories of wealth. Only one of the owners actively managed his herd, buying and selling for maximum profit.

A final development in the economy was a very great surprise to me. The improved road network that made possible the importation of enamelware, which I thought would drive local ngkyagu potters out of business, had been used to export pots to the large commercial center of Maiduguri.

The pottery produced by the ngkyagu of Gulagu had long been recognized for its excellent quality. In 1959-60, middlemen would buy pots and transport them by donkey to Maiduguri, a distance of more than 100 miles, where they would be resold. The trade was relatively small and insignificant; no potter produced either solely or even primarily for this trade. At that time a good potter typically made twenty pots a week during the dry season.

Sometime during the 1960's a middleman decided to use motor transport to ship the pots to Maiduguri, and the trade blossomed. By 1973, it was common to see stacks of crated pots at roadside terminals awaiting transportation. Whereas the middlemen were, formerly, few and not local Margi, by 1981, there were two very successful middlemen living in Kirngu/Jalingo and many more in the local area. The trade had become an important source of cash, and women engaged in the production for trade produced from ninety to one hundred pots per week with only a very slight decrease in quality. Although the business provided ngkyagu with more cash than they had ever known, I knew of no middleman who was an ngkyagu and probably the greater profits were made by mbilim.

The situation with regard to cash cropping was too confused to permit many meaningful conclusions. The only major cash crop in the past had been ground-nuts and little of these had

been raised by traditionalists. But it was not possible to note any increase in production in either 1973-74 or 1981 because reduced rainfall in the years preceding had severely restricted this rain-sensitive crop. I did note significantly greater use of plows and, by 1981, of tractors however, the local Agricultural Agent, who was a Margi, suggested that adoption of improved agricultural techniques was not as great here as in other Margi areas due to the conservativeness of Gulagu.

Wampana participated in the economic prosperity. By 1973, he was a well paid teacher and a subsistence farmer. He lived in a nice, though not extravagant, compound near the road. His family ate well, they dressed well, and they were generally very comfortable. His siblings and parents were prosperous enough that they were in no sense a burden or worry to him. Within a local context, he was a part of the affluent society.

The change most apparent to us when we returned to the area was in demography. Both the size and the distribution of the population was startlingly different from what we had known in 1959-60. Earlier, it has been noted that there have been long term population movements from the east. This has continued; a small cluster of Matakam who lived near Kirngu in 1960 had become an entire hamlet in 1981. This has not added significantly to the heterogeneity of the area, and hamlets remain culturally homogeneous units. There is, however, a different form of migration which has been increasingly evident since about 1930 and the end of Hamman Yaji's domination of the area. As the farm lands of the plains became safe and as governments and missions located wells, schools, dispensary, markets, and other public services in the plains and not in the mountains, there has been a significant depletion of mountain hamlets. This has been achieved without the formal relocation schemes such as that at Gwoza thirty-five miles to the north of Gulagu.

Movement out of the mountains and the nearly deserted hamlets were apparent to all, but this was not the case with what was undoubtedly the greatest demographic change, natural increase. By 1981 the population had undoubtedly grown by at least 75%, assuming a 2.7% annual growth rate. Whereas this is a very substantial growth, it is interesting that few of the local people were much concerned with increasing size. To an extent this is a consequence of being too close to observe the change, but it is also a consequence of the fact that the difference between population redistribution and population growth is difficult to perceive. Those who were aware of the changes--officials of government, school administrators and teachers, and the owners of land being homesteaded by the new inhabitants--were not sure whether they were seeing population growth or population redistribution, as migrants from the mountains as well as others aggregated around the new centers of activity. Even the increase in school population could be confused with the increased popularity of education.

One might expect that an increasing population would be apparent in improved infant and child mortality rates, but no such figures were kept. Furthermore no individual, male or female, whom I interviewed acknowledged that there was higher survival rate, for it is not a readily perceived statistic. Although few seemed to recognize improving infant and child morality rates, there were two noteworthy instances of an awareness of the consequences of such improvement. In 1959-60 discussions of birth control were virtually impossible, the need for such action defied their understanding; but by 1981 many adults expressed concern for their financial ability to educate all of their children. In 1974, the European nurse at the Gulak Dispensary gave me a more specific reference. She said that she had encountered several women in her well-baby clinics who were expressly interested in limiting their families[3] sizes. I am doubtful that very

many women would have practiced the control had they the means, but at least the topic was no longer incomprehensible.

My reason for being skeptical about the implementation of family limitation at this time stems from my conversations with mothers. Women want children, but they have learned that giving birth to children, even live births, is no guarantee that one will have older children in the family. They knew that they must bear many children in order that a few survive (Table 10-1). Furthermore, since death might occur at any time in a child[1]s life, even having several pre-ado1escent children is small comfort. Margi women have come to anticipate death, and thus birth control might seem an improvident act, an act which would tempt fate (p. 89).

TABLE 10-1

Selected marital and fertility data from post-menopausal women,

based on data in Table 4-2 & 4-3

	1959	1974
Number of women	15	29
Number of marriages	44	78
Number of births	117	224
Number of living children	52	104
Average number of marriages	2.9	2.7
Average number of births	7.8	7.7
Average number of living children	3.5	3.6
Percent of children dead	55.6	53.6 (17% as infants)

Wampana did not see any potential problem with the increase in population, yet his experience was doubtlessly typical. He had fathered four children in five years, three of whom were living; as far as he was concerned God would limit his family size and he anticipated nothing different from the experience of men whom he had known who also had two wives. When I pressed him, he admitted that the survival rate of his children was higher than that of his father, for example, who had lost more than one-half his children including three sets of twins, But Wampana asserted that his children were still quite young and one could not tell what might befall them. Margi are accustomed to a certain randomness in the fortunes of individuals and, therefore, do not readily perceive patterns in behavior.

Land was abundant in 1959, but by 1981 it was becoming scarce. This was most noticeable at Kaya where a large settlement had grown around the Roman Catholic Mission, where a priest had introduced some very successful community development programs. Margi from the mountains were very anxious to relocate there and the church was happy to have them. However, the land at Kaya was owned by several men from the royal hamlet, though they permitted it to be used by the new comers These owners were aware of the potential problems but they did not seem to believe that their ownership was vulnerable. A more subtle pressure was apparent in some marshlands around Kafin Hausa which was particularly suited for sugar cane farming, a cash crop. This land was being farmed more and more extensively with new drainage ditches being added each year. Yet the more the marsh was drained the less suitable the land became; within the foreseeable future the marsh either will be drained and the farming will cease or the farming will have to be restricted to ecologically manageable proportions.

Margi population, in summary, is increasing rapidly; and though it has not reached the limits of its land resources, by the year 1990 unless farm techniques are vastly improved or population is controlled, there will be an acute shortage of land. I do not mean to suggest that either or both of these remedial actions might not occur, as it has been my experience that Margi are remarkably practical, pragmatic, and entirely capable of adjusting when the need is clearly understood.

Apart from general population growth, there were interesting changes in the distribution of the population. Most conspicuous was the collection of homesteads along the road and the rapid growth of hamlets previously situated there. The hamlet of Shuwa located on the road was one of the constituent hamlets of the kingdom of Dluku, and in 1960 it was substantially smaller than the royal hamlet. By 1973 it was a very considerable town with the aforementioned trade school, while its royal hamlet had lost population.

The most conspicuous growth of this sort was in the Gulak Village Area, the tax unit that included Gulagu and the District Headquarters. In 1959, the tax census indicated a population of approximately 7,000; in 1973 it was 16,000 and by 1980 it was 27,000. Even allowing for a significant improvement in the tax census, this is a very substantial growth, which primarily represents a growth of government and governmental services. The Bri (Fulani settlement) which constituted the District Headquarters in 1959 was a hamlet of no more than 500 persons, but in 1981 it had grown so much, abutting upon and assimilating other hamlets that it had lost its geographic distinctiveness and effectively became the "town" of Gulak. This growth may best be seen in the two accompanying photographs (Plates 10-1 & 10-2).

Plate 10-1 (1960)

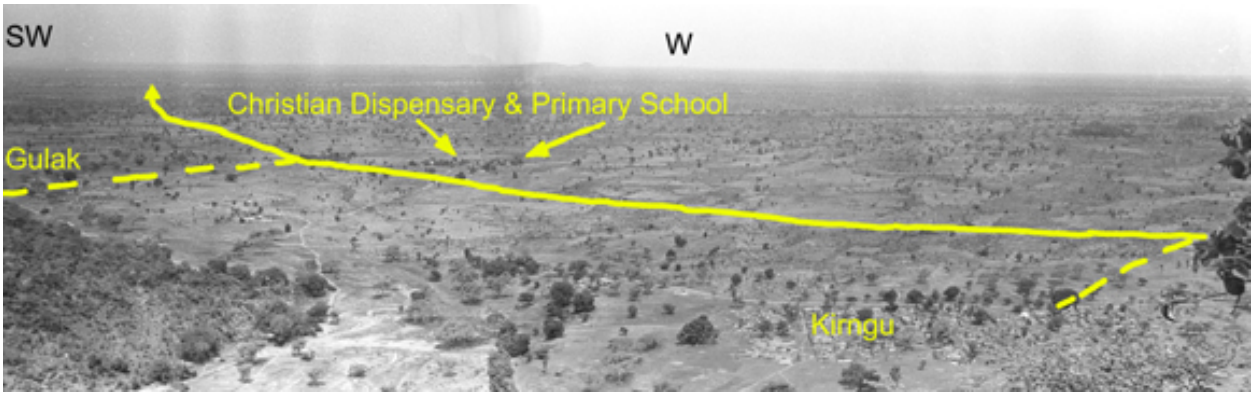
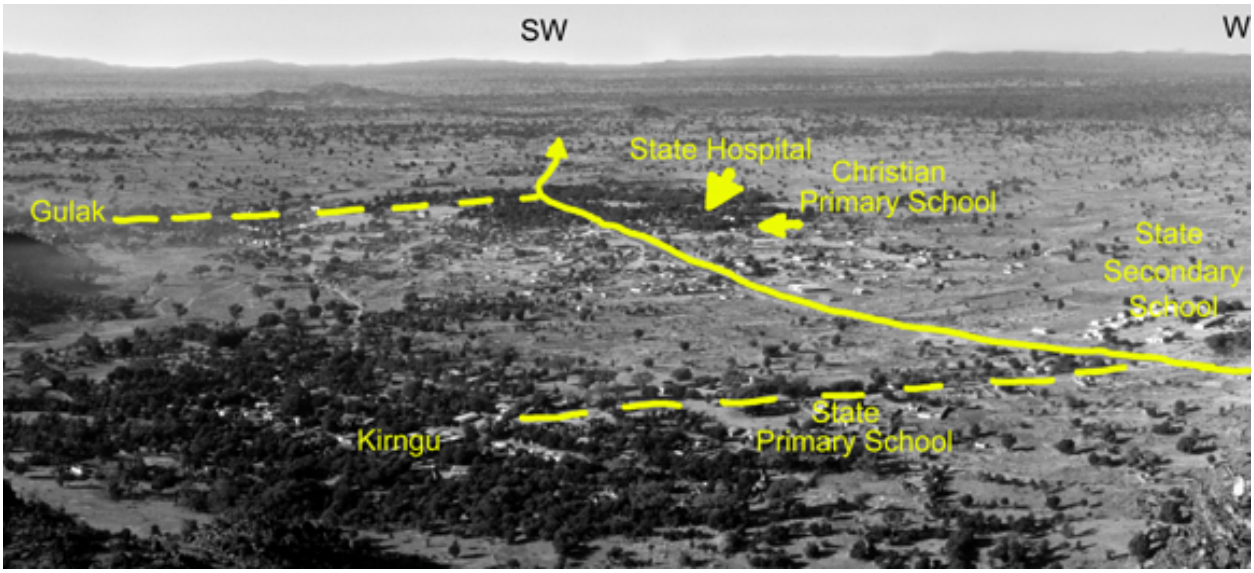


Plate 10-2 (1987)



Changes in the population of Kirngu/Jalingo (Table 10-2) reveal several trends. While the total population increased by 61%, the number of dependent children increased by 78%. The average household increased from 6.56 to 9.59 (42%) and the average number of dependent children per wife increased from 2 to 3.4 (70%) This very likely reflects higher survival rates among children due to improved health conditions. The same reason undoubtedly accounts for

Table 10-2

Summary of Household Surveys - Kərŋu/Jalingo

	1959			1973			1981		
	Number	Population	Mean	Number	Population	Mean	Number	Population	Mean
Compounds	54	336	6.22	71	479	6.65	76	542	7.13
Male Heads	48	315	6.56	46	397	8.69	50	475	9.59
Female Heads	6	21	3.50	25	75	3.00	26	67	2.58
Marriages	46*	311	7.07	43	393	9.14	48	470	9.79
Husbands	46		1.00	43		1.00	48		1.00
Wives	84		1.83	78		1.81	87		1.81
Children	167		3.63	261		6.07	298		6.21
Others	14		.30	11		.26	37		.77
Single Males (indpt)	4	4	1.00	3	4	1.33	2	5	2.50
Children				1		.33	2		1.00
Others							1		.50
Single Females (m/b)	6	21	3.50	25	75	3.00	25	62	2.48
Children	13		2.17	49		1.96	17		.68
Others	2		.33	1		.04	20		.80
Single Females (non-m/b)							1	5	5.00
Children							4		4.00
Monogamous Marriages	23	89	4.24	25	133	5.32	27	151	5.59
Children	28		1.65	81		3.24	91		3.37
Others	5		.22	2		.08	6		.22
Polygynous Marriages	23	222	9.65	18	260	14.44	21	319	15.19
Wives	61		2.65	53		2.94	60		2.86
Children	129		5.61	180		10.00	207		9.86
Others	9		.39	9		.50	31		1.48
Two Wife Marriages	15	122	8.13	9	95	10.56	8	80	10.00
Children	70		4.67	65		7.22	52		6.50
Others	7		.47	3		.33	4		.50
Three Wife Marriages	5	55	11.00	4	59	14.75	8	121	15.13
Children	34		6.80	38		9.50	71		8.88
Others	1		.20	5		1.25	18		2.25
Four Wife Marriages	1	13		4	73	18.25	5	118	23.60
Children	8			52		13.00	85		17.00
Others				1		.25	8		1.60
Five Wife Marriages	1	12							
Children	6								
Seven Wife Marriages	1	20		1	31				
Children	11			23					
Others	1								

*Two married men lived with their fathers

Table 10-2

the increase in the number of male household heads fifty years of age and o1der in 1959 there were but six, while in 1981 there were nineteen. An ominous sign of the future of the giwa is to be found in the decrease in younger heads of households. In 1959 almost 72% of household heads were under forty, but in 1981 only 25% were under that age (Table 10-3). As a consequence the median age of household heads rose from 32 to 45 and the hamlet grew at a slower rate than the area as a whole. The decrease in young household heads may represent

Table 10-3

Kirngu/Jalingo Male Household Heads Grouped by Estimated Age*

Age	1959	1973	1981
80 & Over	1	0	0
70 - 79	1	2	S
60 - 69	1	5	4
50 - 59	3	3	10
40 - 49	7	13	17
30 - 39	14	15	6
20 - 29	19	3	6

*Those whose ages could not be estimated have been omitted.

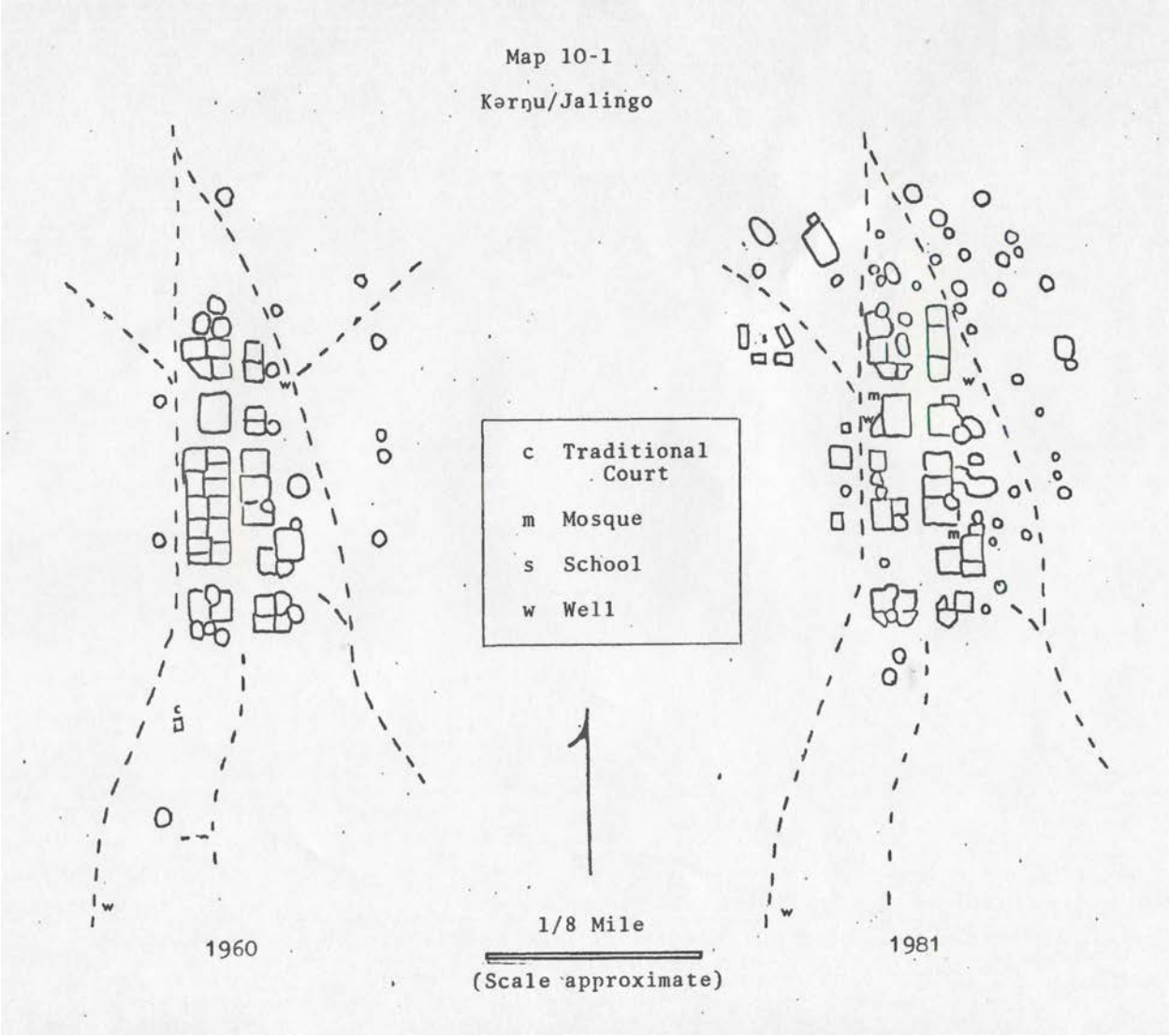
postponement of marriages by some who are seeking opportunities elsewhere, but to a far more significant extent it represents an absolute loss of younger men who prefer to make their homes in hamlets, towns, and cities which they believe to offer more economic advantages or which

they perceive to be more stimulating.

There were also spatial changes to Kirngu/Jalingo which reveal more than mere increase in size. It may be remembered that the hamlet was not built by Margi; rather it was prefabricated and given to them as inducement to leave Mount Gulak (p. 76-77). As the hamlet has evolved it is apparent that little attention has been paid to its original rectilinear plan, and compounds have been added in clusters which more nearly approximated the traditional pattern (map 10-1). However, in 1981 virtually all of the new buildings were rectangular and new compounds were more frequently rectangular than circular.

Both Humbili (Table 10-4) and Makwan, remoter hamlets, showed decreases of about 20% in their populations. In the past, loss of population in such hamlets primarily came through migration of entire households. To judge from my interviews in Humbili and Makwan, this is becoming less common as each approaches a residual core of conservative household heads. Consequently, attrition will typically come as a result of the death of a household head and through the emigration of the young and widows who often follow their sons to plain's homesteads. There were important demographic differences in the residences of Christians and Muslims. Virtually all of the Muslims in Gulak were concentrated in the area of District Headquarters or in Kirngu/Jalingo, while the Christian population was more widely distributed throughout the area. There was a Christian church at Humbili where there were no Christians in 1959. Wampana lived near the road and the Mission Station. He had chosen not to live in Kirngu/Jalingo though it was not more than a half mile distant. The pull of the educated Christian community and the "modernity" of the road had been too strong. Living along the road and the newly developed areas around the District Headquarters had its disadvantages in the

Map 10-1



opinions of a few. They recognized the distractions that accompanied those places, and I generally found farmers in remote areas to be more productive. One told me, "I would rather live in Makwan and fight the baboons than live along the road."

One of the changes to be noted was not surprising. Mafakur had virtually disappeared.

Table 10-4

Summary of Household Surveys-Humbili

	1974			1981		
	Number	Population	Mean	Number	Population	Mean
Compounds	89	411	4.62	76	389	5.12
Male Heads	67	367	5.48	60	343	5.72
Female Heads	22	44	2.00	16	46	2.88
Marriages	64*	359	5.61	56	331	5.91
Husbands	64		4.00	56		1.00
Wives	85		1.33	81		1.45
Children	203		3.17	178		3.18
Others	7		.11	16		.29
Single Male (non-dpndnt)	5	8	1.60	4	12	3.00
Children	3		.60	4		1.00
Others				4.		1.00
Single Females (m/b)	22	44	2.00	18**	43	2.56
Children	16		.73	22		1.22
Others	6		.27	6		.33
Monogamous Marriages	46	219	4.76	38	192	5.05
Children	122		2.65	104		2.74
Others	5		.11	12		.32
Polygynous Marriages	18	140	7.78	18	139	7.73
Wives	39		2.17	43		2.39
Children	81		4.50	74		4.11
Others	2		.11	4		.22
Two Wife Marriages	15	103	6.87	11	71	6.45
Children	57		3.80	38		3.45
Others	1		.07			
Three Wife Marriages	3	37	12.33	7	68	9.71
Children	24		8.00	36		5.14
Others	1		.33	4		.57

* Two married men live with their fathers.

** Four women live in two residences.

Table 10-4

The stated reason for its demise was the conversions to Islam by the principal mafa and the adoption of egalitarian ideals by other converts to Islam and Christianity. However, the behavior of Wancina in 1960 (pp. 149-150) was strongly suggestive of the vulnerability of the status. The exclusivity of the society and the problems of integrating outsiders which were discussed earlier (p. 155=156) simply are not problems for societies in the 1970's.

The most startling changes to me were in marriage proscriptions; after the mid-1960's both inter-caste marriage and classificatory sister marriage occurred. The numbers of each were few, but they are nonetheless remarkable. There were six instances in which mbilim males married ngkyagu females. Five of the men were well known to me and I was able to discuss their marriages with them freely and openly. My conclusions are on two levels. first, there is the perception of the situation by the participants, and second, there are certain inescapable social correlates which are unrecognized by the participants. Each man states that his marriage became possible when he converted to Islam, for it does not recognize the caste distinctions of traditional Margi culture.[6] The restructuring of caste relations extended to behavior other than marriage even though the ngkyagu themselves were not converts. For example, I have seen a group who had been very conservative traditionalists in the past casually sharing a drinking calabash with two pagan ngkyagu. This would have been unthinkable to these very men fifteen years earlier.

To return to the inter-caste marriages, each instance was said to have been based upon personal attraction between the two individuals. This statement was not only characteristic of the couples but of their neighbors--Muslim and non-Muslim, ngkyagu and non-ngkyagu. However, it

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[6] Islam was imperfectly understood by its new converts and some of their characterizations might be challenged by more orthodox adherents.

[7] Most male ngkyagu did not approve of these marriages and said that they would not permit their dependent daughters to marry mbilim, but they also confessed that they were unable to control more mature women.

must also be pointed out that each man was a pottery middleman and each of the women an excellent potter. It would go too far to say the men married the women in order to have better access to their skills. For one thing the wives sold their pots to their husbands even after marriage. But the fact that the middleman and potter were thrown together and the previous constraints upon marriage lifted was perhaps enough to let personal attraction do the rest.[7]

The cases of classificatory sister marriage were but two and they, too, had a superficial explanation at the personal level, but I find it difficult to offer a deeper explanation with any confidence. Damburam and a son of the late Ptil Simnda each married daughters of their fathers' brothers. These were women they each called ngwamu, and further they were women who had lived in the hamlet and each had been known as ngwamu.[7a]

Their explanation was that Islam sanctioned such marriages, and so it does. I suggest that the cultural heterogeneity the area may account for the ease of change. Even the most conservative Margi are aware that surrounding societies have different customs and, for that matter, they are aware that different Margi clans have mutually diverse practices. For example, everyone knows that Fulani sanction marriage with one's father's brother's child; no matter how un-Margi this may be, it is known and therefore conceivable. Consequently, the diversity of custom in the area provides to Margi cultural alternatives which, when conditions warrant, can be instituted more easily than had no alternatives been known (Vaughan 1981).

Polygyny (Table 10-5) in Kirngu/Jalingo slightly decreased in incidence and increased in

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[7a] The widespread observation that parallel cousin marriage in patrilineal societies protects jointly owned property because bridewealth never leaves the lineage did not seem to be a causal consideration in these cases, and the general weakness of Margi fal dose not support the view. But the cases are too few to make an authoritative comment.

intensity between 1959 and 1974, but seems to have stabilized thereafter. At Humbili polygyny showed a slight increase between 1974 and 1981. Kirngu/Jalingo data also reveal that polygyny in 1981 was less common among household heads over 60 and under 30 years of age. (Comparable data were not collected at Humbili.) This probably reflects the fact that bridewealth had increased from £15 (N30) in 1959 to N100 in 1973-74, and N400 in 1981. It also reveals a general decline in both the status and material security of older Margi males who, without educations, are excluded from the new sources of wealth.

Table 10-5

Changes in Polygyny and Divorce

Measures	Kərŋu/Jalingo			Humbili	
	1959	1973	1981	1973	1981
Polygyny					
Incidence (p)	50	42	44	28	32
Intensity (w)	265	294	286	217	239
General Index (m)	183	181	181	133	145
	1959-60	1973-74		1973-74	
Divorce Rates					
Per 1000 population	23.8	4.3		19.5	
Per 1000 wives	95.2	25.6		94.1	

Table 10-5

Divorce (Table 10-5) statistics in the former royal hamlet were surprising. a drastic drop from 95 (per 1000 married women) in 1961 to 26 in 1973. At first I assumed that the increase in bridewealth accounted for the increased stability, since anthropologists have posited a relationship between the amount of bridewealth and marital stability (for example, Goody

1973:12). However, when I surveyed Humbili in 1974, I found the rate there was 94, although bridewealth had increased similarly. Further investigation disclosed that the difference was related to the conversions to Islam; the former hamlet was two-thirds Muslim, while the latter was entirely pagan. Islam, as practiced in Gulagu, greatly restricted the rights of women to initiate divorces and since so many divorces in traditional marriages were initiated by women, the conversions severely reduced the divorce rate. As for the increase in bridewealth and its apparent inability to stabilize marriage among pagans, I can only suggest that inflation offset the increase. It is also possible that in pagan marriages alternatives were found to cash transactions.

One of the most noteworthy changes for the Margi Dzirngu has been the increase in schooling, but because most of the early schools were founded by missionaries, it is a topic closely related to changes in religion. Conversion to Islam has been discussed, but it was not alone in its growth. Christianity also increased. While the growth of Islam was precipitated by political changes, the growth of Christianity has been primarily related to expansion in public education.

Mission schools were established among the Dzirngu in 1948-49, and it was primarily through them that the missionaries reached the Margi. However, the need for education was not then perceived, and the schools rarely enrolled many children from influential families. The children of Kirngu were notoriously slow to attend schools. The situation in 1960 was summarized for me in a private communication from Rev. H. Stover Kulp, one of the founders of the CBM:

> The school work was begun in 1949. It has been discouraging. It is a Junior Primary School, that is, first four years of Primary School. It has been difficult to induce the parents to send children to school. In the past couple of years it has been possible to enroll a fair sized Class I but the leakage is

> terrific. In 11 years from Gulak and Bitiku [a hamlet of Gu1agu] 248 names are on the Admission register. Of these only 36 completed the four years of school. It is very evident that there is very, very little community support for the school. (letter dated January 25, 1961; cf. Bischof 1960)

In time, of course, the material advantages of education were apparent to everyone. By 1981, schools were everywhere evident; including' a primary school in Kirngu/Jalingo and a secondary school under construction only about a quarter mile from that former bastion of traditionalism. Virtually all children from the giwa attended school, there were twenty-eight away at secondary schools, and nine were in college or university (no college or university graduates had yet permanently returned). Finally, five residents--all descendants of Pti1 Wampana-were school teachers.

Although the government now operates the schools, most teachers in Gulak were Christian and willing to influence enrolling children of pagans, who with rare exception decide to be known as either Muslim or Christian. At this time, the probable influence of such teachers, the old association of education, modernity, and Christianity, and the pagans' traditional suspicion of Islam seem to have resulted in a greater growth in Christianity than Islam. Between 1960 and 1980, Protestants in Madagali District increased from 53 to 1,974, almost all of whom were Margi; this count does not include many persons who are virtually church members but have not made formal commitments. From my interviews with churchmen, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, I estimate that there are approximately 8,000 Christians or near-Christians. Estimates of conversions to Islam are more difficult partly because the District's Fulani population (28,500) is wholly Muslim and some Margi converts to Islam disappear into the Fulani count. But it seems probable that the total number of Margi who were either Christian or

Muslim in 1981 probably was about 15% of the Margi population. But it is most important to realize that the rates of conversion to both Islam and Christianity are increasing rapidly.

The number of educated Christians gave to Christianity a prestige it did not formerly have. Most of the local businesses were in their hands, and many were models of success. The situation was enhanced by the success of Christians in the 1979 elections. In general one found that with the increase in the importance of education a new class structure emerged in which Christians had unusual influence.

The emergence of a new class structure represented not so much a shift in resources as a reorientation of values. Traditionally, as shown in Chapter 6, royalty was superior by virtue of access to the ptil, his power and mystery. Education was not valued because it was literally worthless. By the 1970's governmental reorganization had denigrated traditional royalty. Many traditionalists lost their positions, while in other instances Margi with "modern" orientations were appointed to vacancies without regard to their "right" to the position. Nothing was more "modern" than education. It was virtually a prerequisite for all new appointments, and consequently, it became valued.

It is ironic that Christianity has become a symbol of the new upper class status, since those first attracted to the religion were so frequently talaka (commoners). Not surprisingly they proved to be non-traditionalists and in some cases anti-traditionalists. For some this was more than a matter of principle, it was an opportunity to even a score. Wampana remembered, albeit with a sense of guilt, that when he had been young he and his companions from Kirngu had flaunted their royalty before talaka boys. Although such encounters did not truly constitute class exploitation--Margi differences were not that great--the effects were just as lasting for some of

the victims,

When those who had previously been reviled have found themselves in positions of authority over their former social superiors Christian charity has not been conspicu[6]usly manifest. A measure of this feeling was revealed when I discovered that a European missionary at Gulak had been deliberately kept ignorant about the existence of the traditional Margi state and had been persuaded that Damburam was merely a pretentious old man.[8]

Whether the new class structure is more democratic than the former is doubtful; at least that is the opinion of most pagan commoners. They remain suspicious of the educated know-it-all who profess to speak for them. A test of their attitudes toward leadership revealed that they still wanted to judge prospective leaders in terms of their reputations, their clans, and other ascribed criteria, instead of their platforms, their education, or their wealth.

On the other hand, it seems fair to say that the new class structure may be a necessary step toward the integration and modernization of the area. Christianity, Islam and education are all less provincial than traditionalism, and thus they constitute potential bases for wider integration into Nigerian society.

Wampana was the only person I know who saw these changes in perspective. Unlike the rest of the educated elite, he was not a commoner with an ax to grind. Although he loved the former royal hamlet and loved and respected Damburam, he knew that changes were inevitable and he believed that they were for the best. He recognized that the nostalgia of Damburam and some others of the royal hamlet were consequences of a changing power structure. But he said,

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[8] This was possible because around 1960 both Protestant and Catholic missionaries were no longer trained in local languages, using Hausa as a lingua franca instead, but among Margi Dzirngu, very few women, and relatively few older men spoke Hausa. These Euroamerican missionaries have been restricted in their knowledge of local lore and isolated from traditional Margi.

"I, myself, feel happy in this time of achievement. Everyone is to try for himself. It is not the time of riches--not the time of fathers, or of ancestors. I am proud of my family, but every man must succeed on his own now."

Given the conservative, culturally self-sufficient society we had left in 1960, I found the changes described above revolutionary. And though the most obvious changes were to be found in the towns along the road and among those who had converted to Islam or Christianity, even the most remote pagan felt the impact. Furthermore, there was a general acceptance of these changes which was remarkable. Of course, people recognized that there were problems. the Nigerian economy had by 1981 produced such opportunities that even some local Margi were becoming very prosperous, and the difference between rich and poor in the District was much greater than anything they had ever known; there was also an impatience with civi1ian rule, which from the local perspective was too involved in its own benefits, and one could hear opinions which indicated that a return to military rule would not have been unpopular; finally, the aged, in particular, complained about a normlessness which created ambiguity in life, a condition Margi have always found intolerable (Vaughan 1964:396). Nonetheless, there was almost complete agreement that the material conditions of their lives were substantially better than they had been in 1960, though there had been no particular complaints then. They recognized that they were living in improved circumstances, with improved health and educational facilities, and generally in safer conditions.

I confess that both the magnitude and the apparent ease of change surprised me, but it would be inaccurate to suggest that there were no problems. In 1973, I soon noticed that there was considerably more drinking than in my earlier residence, and public drunkenness was often

said to be on the increase. The beer market held an honored position in traditional Margi society. Though the truly determined drinkers could always find some mpadlu to buy on non-market days they were rare largely because there was not enough cash in the society to support their thirst, and Margi brewers, like those in much of the rest of the world, deal only in cash.

The increased prosperity of the 1970's changed this, and beer markets increased. For example, Humbili, a hamlet which never had beer markets has held one regularly since about 1970, and there were other such hamlets, as well as individual women who had discovered that they could always sell mpadlu. Whereas in 1959-60 there was the occasional man known for his love of mpadlu, by 1973 there were known alcoholics, men regarded as disgraceful drunks.

The nature of the problem was not, however, understood. Traditionally the ultimate constraint upon drinking had been lack of money; with the large increase of cash, many Margi seemed not to know how to stop drinking. In this sense converts to Islam had an advantage; they had the moral constraint against drinking though it did not always work The Brethren are notably abstemious, but they never seem to have made much of an issue about drinking mpadlu, though they did, like the Roman Catholics, condemn drunkenness.

Wampana's ideas were quite traditional on this topic. He liked mpadlu and drank it in moderation at the local beer markets. He was also a prosperous man. He aspired to a style of life very different from the traditional. Frequently I had European-style beer and Wampana occasionally saw me drinking, though he always refused my offers, taking a soft drink instead. On one occasion toward the end of our 1973-74 stay in Gulagu, I encountered him when he was obviously drunk. He avoided me for a time thereafter, though he finally told me that he had bought some European-style beer and it had been too strong for him. I do not know if this was

his first experience; unfortunately it was not to be his last.

After I left Gulagu in 1974 I can only guess at the details of what happened. He was, as noted, an alienated man. He had lost much of his support in the Christian community, his father and friends in his home hamlet were either Muslim or pagan, and his status as royalty was a source of difficulty in the educated community including the school where he taught. Nor can I ignore the questionable example I had set him. At that point in his life when he was most alienated, I had accepted him and thereby provided him with a role model, but a model who drank, however moderately. I think that I failed to appreciate the obligation I bore when he had told me that I was a father to him. With an anthropologist's diffidence, I feared to interfere in his life. I turned away his questions with skillful indirection. I was too much the ethnographer, too little his father.

Whatever the reasons, he began to drink and took to drinking a dangerous distilled palm wine brought from the south. On September 1, 1976, I received the following letter from Muhammadu Sanusi, the District Head of Madagali District:

Madagali District Office
Gulak
16th August, 1976

Dear Father,

I wish you are quite well with your family. I am writing to inform you with deep regret that M. Wampana is dead. He died in General Hospital Mubi on 15/8/76 after unsuccessful operation, and was brought and buried in Gulak…

Ironically, he was buried in the Christian cemetery, not in the Gidum burial grounds at old Kirngu where he had told me he wished to be interred.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

This chapter began with a statement concerning the dilemma of explaining change in terms of general pattern or in terms of specific history. The great model for the study of change has been that of organic evolution. Despite naive and mistaken interpretations, the metaphor of cultural and social evolution remains our most viable paradigm of the general pattern to societal change. It is, however, the model most removed from individual lives; it concerns itself with the explanation of change in societies not individuals. In this it is similar to its organic referent, for in organic evolution individual animals do not evolve; it is the population which changes.

But in societies, individuals can and do change, and at this point the parallel with organic evolution becomes analogical instead of homological. But not only do humans change, we, both as fellow humans and students, react to their changes. The sentient quality of humans--both subjects and investigators--as contrasted with genes, poses peculiar difficulties for students of social evolution our subjects feel and we feel with them.

No matter how abstract or general the discussion of the evolution of Margi society, it must be remembered that changes come about through changes in individual lives. And no matter how easy that may be for many, for a few it is otherwise--and they haunt me. I can see the pattern of evolution of Margi society as it becomes less provincial, as it leaves the verge, and as its members take places in a broader society. I can feel relief knowing that the citizens of that society will surely enjoy fuller, easier, and healthier lives, and I know that these would not be possible in the Margi society I first knew. But I cannot forget that some will--and some have--

paid a dear price.

In the weft of that resplendent fabric of the new society, there are a few, almost imperceptible, broken threads.

Appendix

A Rules of Kin Terminology

B Behavioral Dyads of Kin

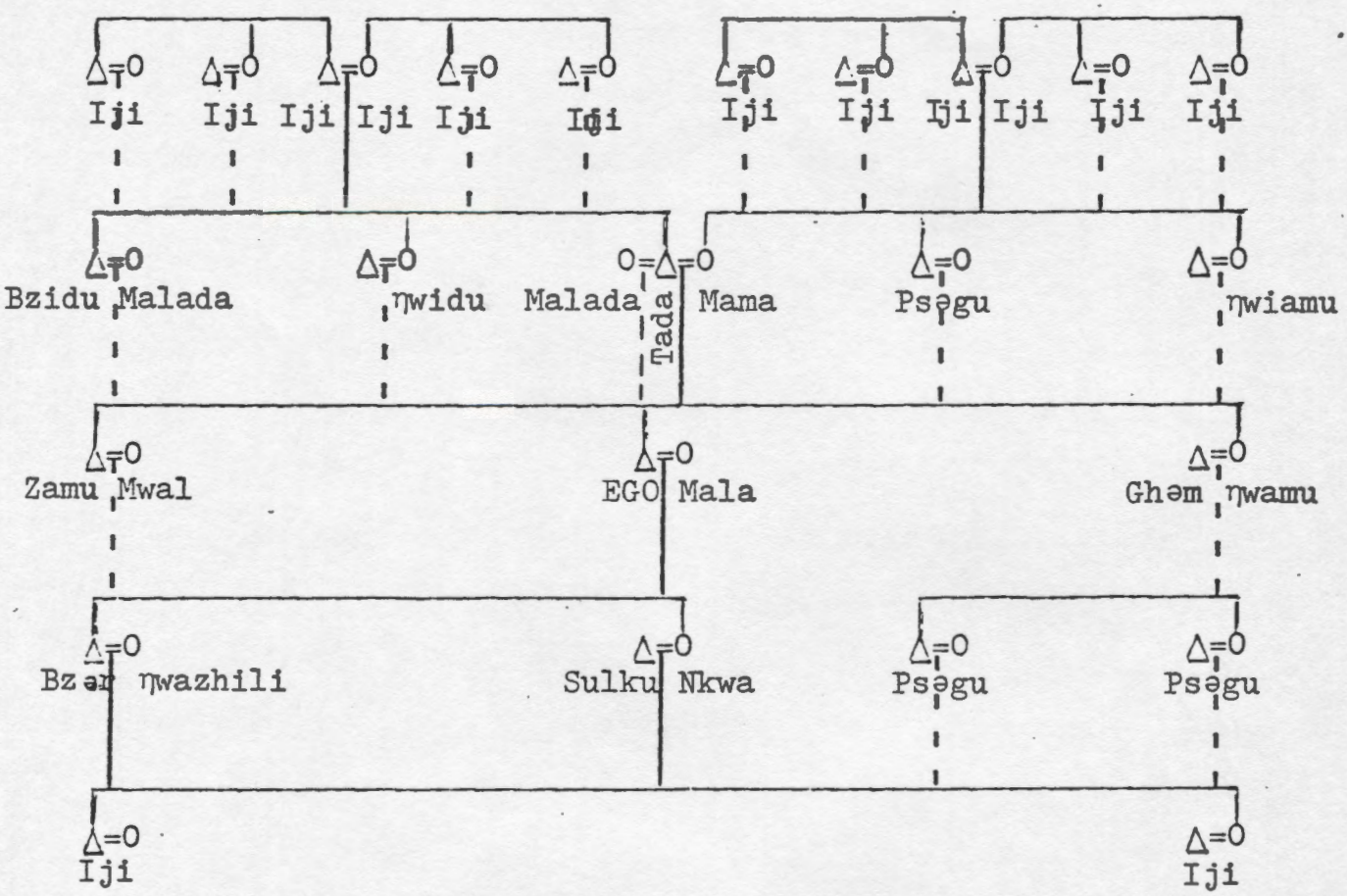
Margi kinship terms are indicated in Diagrams A-1 through A-4. There are two observations about their terminology which are best made when looking at the total range of kinsmen. First, there is a similarity of patterning between the male consanguineal (Diagram A-1) and the female affinal (Diagram A-4) systems which is not characteristic of the female consanguineal (Diagram A-2) and the male allinal (Diagram A-3) systems. Each pair shows adaptation to the patrilocal marital residence characteristic of the Margi. Since a Margi wife normally lives in her husband's hamlet, his kinsmen are particularly relevant to her, consequently, her affinal terms are similar to his consanguineal terms. On the other hand, a husband's relations with his wife's kinsmen are relatively infrequent and formal, therefore, his affinal terminology is limited since little differentiation is needed.

A second pattern may be noted in the difference between the consanguineal terminologies of males and females (Diagrams A-1 and A-2). In brief, a male has a terminology for his ŋwamu's children (psəgu) different from that used by a female, although no other consanguineal relatives are so differentiated. This arises as a consequence of the special relationship between "mother's brother" and "sister's child," to be discussed below. The kin term used between these two categories is self-reciprocating, but since a female can never be a "mother's brother," she cannot have a psəgu in the descending generation. There is a "compensation" in that the term is extended to the

Diagram A -1

Consanguineal Terminology

(Male Ego)



(Broken lines indicate terminology equivalent to that indicated by solid line. For example, children of Bzidu, ŋwidu, Psəgu, and ŋwiamu are called Zamu and ŋwamu, depending upon their sexes, just as the children of Tada are.)

Diagram A -2

Consanguineal Terminology

(Female Ego)

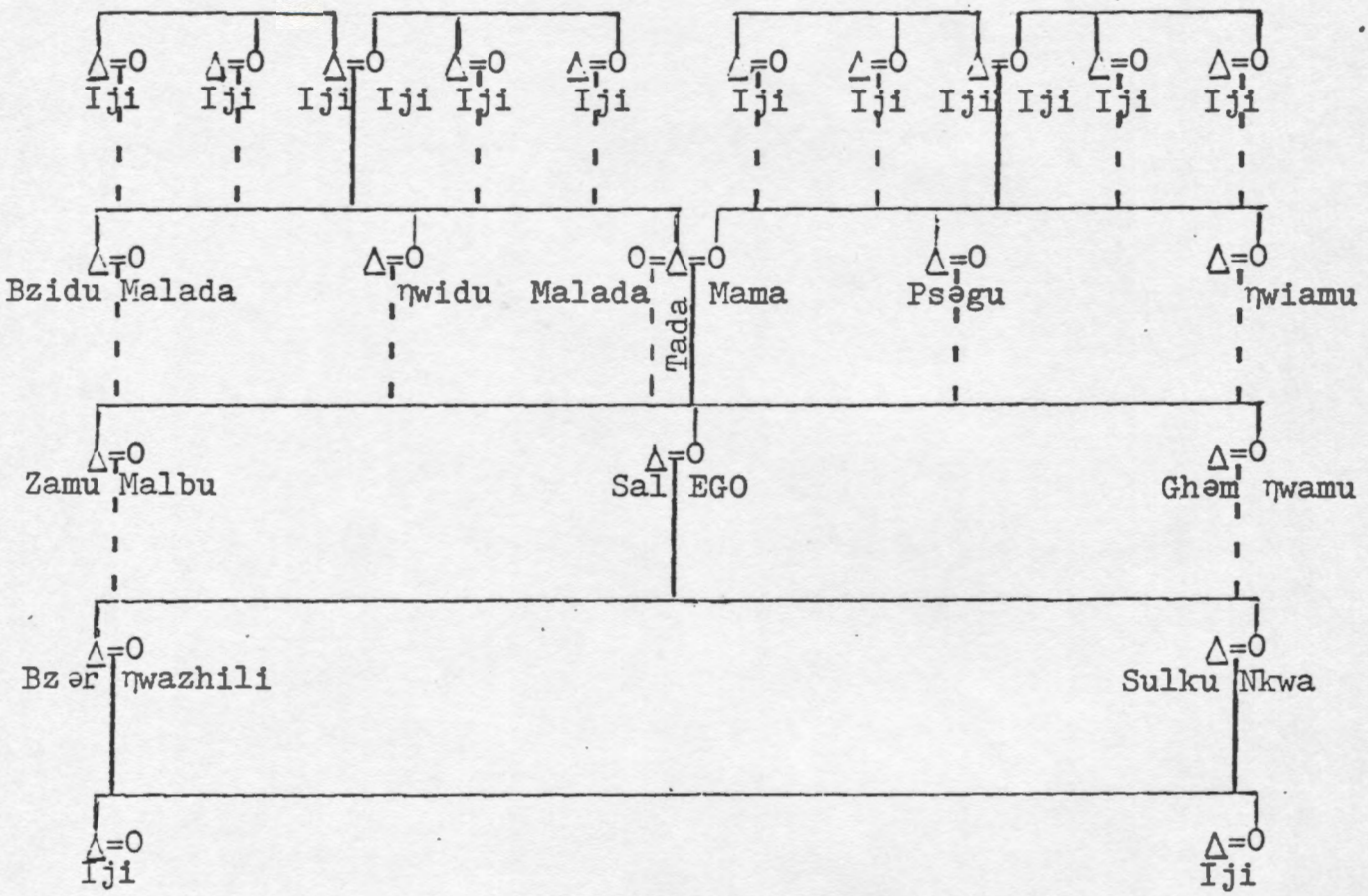
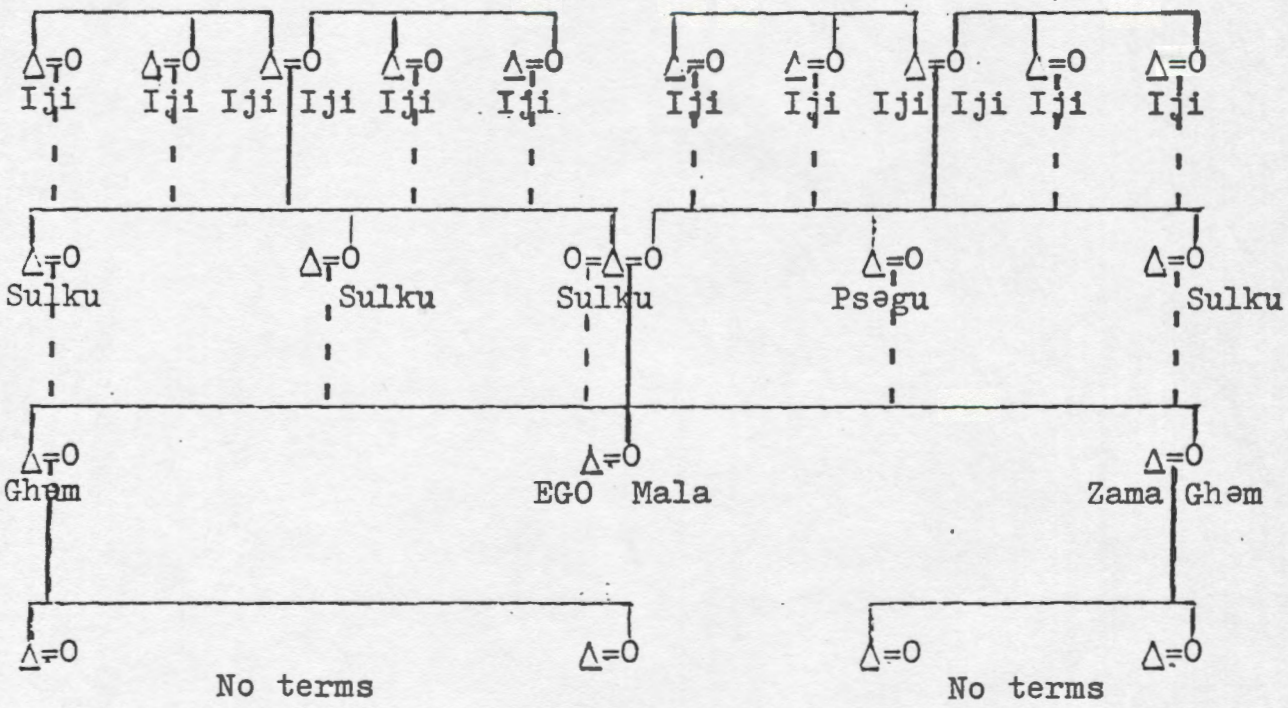


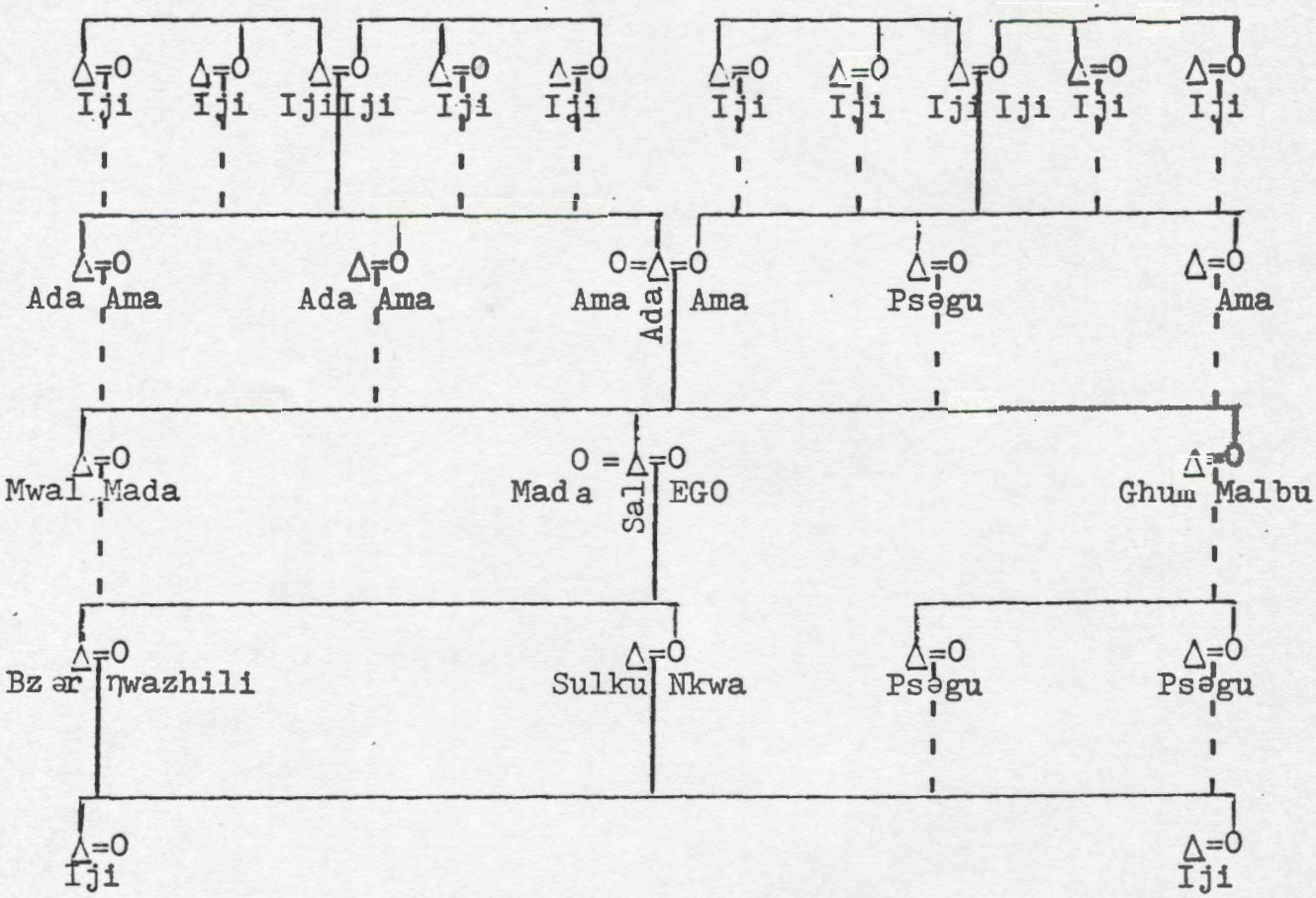
Diagram A -3



Affinal Terminology

(Male Ego)

Diagram A -4



Affinal Terminology

(Female Ego)

wife of a psəgu, so a woman has a psəgu in her affinal terminology, i.e., the children of her husband's ŋwamu.

Rules of Margi Kin Terminology (Variant terms or pronumciation in parentheses)

1. A male parent is referred to as tada and called da.
2. A female parent is referred to as mama and called ma.
3. A male sibling is referred to as zamu.
4. A female sibling is referred to as ŋwamu.
5. A male offspring is referred to as bzər.
6. A female offspring is referred to as nkwa.
7. Any person that tada or mama refers to as tada or mama is referred to as iji and called ciji.
8. Any person that an iji refers to as zamu or ŋwamu is referred to as iji.
9. Any person that tada refers to as zamu is referred to as bzidu (bziadu) (bzedu) and called da.
10. Any person that tada refers to as ŋwamu is referred to as ŋwidu (ŋwiadu) and addressed as ma.
11. Any person that mama refers to as zamu is referred to as psəgu.
12. Any person that mama refers to as ŋwamu is referred to as ŋwiamu and called ma.
13. Any person referred to as bzər or nkwa by bzidu, ŋwidu, psəgu, or ŋwiamu is referred to as zamu or ŋwamu depending upon the sex.
14. The male and female offspring of any zamu are referred to as bzər and nkwa respectively.

15a. For a male ego, the offspring of any ŋwamu is called psəgu regardless of sex. Note rule 11; this is a self-reciprocating term.

15b. For a female ego, the male and female offspring of any ŋwamu are referred to as bzər and nkwa.

16. The offspring of all bzər, nkwa, and psəgu of rule 15a are referred to as iji. Note rule 7: this is a self-reciprocating term.

Rules of Margi Affinal Terminology

1. The spouse of any iji of ascending or descending generation is referred to as iji and called ciji.

2. The spouse of tada, other than mama, is referred to as malada and addressed as ma.

3. The spouse of bzidu is referred to as malada and addressed as ma.

4. The spouse of any psəgu, of ascending or descending generation is referred to as psəgu.

5a. For a male ego, own spouse is referred to as mala.

5b. For a female ego, own spouse is referred to as sal.

6a. For a male ego, a spouse of zamu is referred to as mwal (kwani). Mwal is the term for "friend" in general usage. In such cases it takes the long pronominal construction, mwalgiya, my friend. In kin usage the short pronominal construction is employed, mwalda, my zamu's wife or my husband's zamu. Among Margi Babal the term kwani is used.

6b. For a female ego the spouse of any zamu is referred to as malbu.

7. The spouse of any ŋwamu is referred to as ghəm.

8. The spouse of any bzər is referred to as ŋwazhili.

9. The spouse of any nkwa is referred to as sulku and addressed as bzər.

10. For a male ego, any person referred to by mala as tada, mama, bzidu, malada, ŋwidu, and ŋwiamu is referred to as sulku and addressed as da or ma according to sex. Note 9: this is self-reciprocating.

11. For a female ego, any person referred to by sal as tada or bzidu is referred to as ada and addressed as da.

12. For a female ego, any person referred to by sal as mama, malada, or ŋwiamu is referred to as ama and addressed as ma.

13. Any person one's spouse refers to as psəgu is also referred to as psəgu.

14. For a male ego, any person called zamu or ŋwamu by mala is referred to as ghəm. See 7; this is a self-reciprocating term.

15. For a female ego, any person referred to by sal as zamu is referred to as mwal. See 6a.

16. For a female ego, any person referred to by sal as ŋwamu is referred to as malbu.

17. For a male ego, the spouse of a male ghəm is referred to as ghəm.

18. For a male ego the spouse of a female ghəm is referred to as zama. This is a self-reciprocating term.
19. For a female ego, other spouses of sal are referred to as mad:a (mad u).
20. For a female ego, the spouse of mwal is referred to as mad:a (mad u).
21. For a female ego, the spouse of an affinal malbu is referred to as ghəm. See 17; this is a self-reciprocating term.

Behavioral Relationships Between Kin Dyads

The expected relationship between kinsmen within one's own patrilineal grouping are set forth in the following pairs.

Iji/Iji. (Addressed as ciji). This relationship reveals a relaxation from the proprietary orientation associated with one's own lineage, particularly in the case of iji who is tada's mama. Iji of the ascending generation tend to be indulgent and permissive with their young iji, though this does not approach licensed or familiar behavior. A young iji may reside with an aged iji in order to assist in the routine of daily life. Although this relationship is more likely to develop into one in which the senior iji exercises more authority over the younger, it is still a relationship of relative warmth and indulgence when compared to that between a parent and the same child.

Tada-Bzəɾ (tada is addressed as da). This relationship

is characterized by authority and obedience. Tada is the ultimate authority and to him is owed complete obedience. Tada are especially concerned with the behavior of the bzər, as bad behavior reflects directly upon him. Bzər are also economically important to their tada, for they assist in the farming and other work which ultimately measure a man's wealth. Tada are therefore careful to see that their bzir know how to work and are willing workers. One's tada is the principle source of enculturation into the responsibilities and privileges of manhood. Tada, as the immediate source of all authority, generates considerable hostility in his bzir. Young men frequently run away from their home hamlet for short periods of time to escape the authoritarianism of their tada.

One well educated and eloquent man discussed the status of tada in the following way. "Most people say tada is the authority in the family, and he is the only one they have to respect. He is really a little dictator (English word) within his own family. When someone does wrong, he especially fears his tada; he fears him more than anyone else. . . . . The tada is concerned with the growth of this boy or girl but much more so with the boys since he realizes that the boys will be the people to continue the family name."

Tada/Nkwa. There is a decrease in intensity which modifies this relationship, although in general it is of the same order of the tada/bzər dyad. The reasoning behind this diminution is indicated in the quotation above. Nkwa are

far from spoiled and they must also work in the family fields, but the constant criticism which seems to surround boys and young men is far less for their sisters. There is not, however, any open display of affection between the pair; nkwa always fear their tada especially as they approach marriage, for at that time his decisions are critical for them.

Bzidu/Bzər & Nkwa. (Bzidu is addressed as da). The fact that bzidu is addressed by the same term as tada reflects the nature of the relationship. Bzidu can be relied upon to support the decisions of tada. They have very similar concerns, except that they are diminished because the youths in question are not their own and do not fall under them to the same extent. However, it is necessary to note that high mortality rates often mean that a child will be raised in the compounds of its bzidu as either the result of tada's death and the dissolution of its immediate family or as a result of the leverite whenever its mother becomes the wife of bzidu. If such a move takes place, there will be very little difference between the status of bzidu and tada. A bzidu is, in brief, a tada-surrogate who may behave like tada and who may formally replace him.

ŋwidu/Bzər. Although ŋwidu is addressed as ma there is little similarity with the mama/bzər relationship. ŋwidu is the woman most likely to be regarded as an authority figure, though not with the same force as a man. She is treated with great respect. It is said, "When ŋwidu has said something it

sticks to you, you cannot escape it"; and it is recognized that she has much of the authority of tada and bzidu. However, it is unlikely that she would ever strike bzər, this being reserved of tada and sometimes mama.

ŋwidu/Nkwa. This relationship is very much like the one above, except that ŋwidu is able to exercise more direct authority over nkwa. They are much alike in their orientation to the kin group; each a female in a male oriented grouping, each will presumably find her life outside the group eventually, although each will always be a member and always return to the group for succor. The similarity between them does not breed closeness, however.

Zamu/Zamu. Address is most commonly by personal name. Included in this term are one's male siblings (same mother), one's male half-siblings (sons of father's co-wife), and the sons of any bzidu. Though the three are included in a single term, each is behaviorally distinct. In most hamlets a male's peers are his zamu. As a boy they are his playmates, as a young man they are his co-workers and friends, and as an adult these are his neighbors. Yet there is a noticeable degree of sibling rivalry among zamu, between the sons of one woman and the sons of her co-wife, and between the sons of a man and the sons of their bzidu. These are in decreasing intensity. Rivalry between sons of the same tada is most likely to occur at the death of the tada and the subsequent division of the inheritance. Traditionally the eldest son

inherits and the others are dependent upon his fairness and generosity. With the division completed there is little which materially holds zamu together, especially if land is plentiful elsewhere. It is at this point that men are most likely to separate from the hamlet of their birth and orientation. In such cases they are most likely to move to the hamlet of their mama, which, technicially, is avunculocal residence though it has nothing to do with matriliniality. In cases where the patrimony is large and the oldest son holds on to it, the rivalry and hostility may, however, continue. One man I know used his patrimony to marry many wives who then worked the substantial lands left him by his father, all to the detriment of his younger zamu. As they come of age, there was nothing for them to receive of their father's bequest, and several of them left the hamlet angry at their eldest zamu.

In the matter of inheritance zamu who have the same mother as the oldest son are in the most favored position, for a man will distribute the patrimony first to his closest zamu. It is rare that inheritance is large enough for there to be any left for zamu related through a sibling of the deceased, that is, zamu through bzidu. In recent years there has been a tendency for the patrimony to be divided equally among the sons of a tada with the eldest holding the shares of minors in trust. This greatly reduces the rivalry between zamu and the disputes following the death of tada, though the trust can be betrayed.

Presuming that the zamu continue to live in the same hamlet--which is normal--the intensity of the rivalry will decrease as each becomes self-sufficient and relatively equal in status and wealth. As the rivalry of youth vanishes, zamu become neighbors and friends. It would appear, however, that the closest relations are between zamu related through the same mother.

Zamu/ŋwamu. Relationships between this pair are among the warmest and most varied of Margi kinship. They are peers, yet peers lacking rivalry, since the domains of men and women are so distinct that neither is a competitor of the other. Nor do they have to interact on many matters of formal importance. A man regards his ŋwamu with supportive affection which is more pronounced between those who are children of the same mother and/or father. At another level the ŋwamu by the same father may be regarded as the eventual source of his wife, for the bridewealth derived from her marriage should ideally be used for his wife. That it frequently is used to acquire a wife for their tada is but one more source of hostility between tada and bzir. Should ŋwamu become divorced and her tada be deceased, her zamu will negotiate a subsequent marriage and directly receive the bridewealth.

The general constraints imposed upon the behavior between men and women are not always characteristic of the zamu/ŋwamu relationship. Once after learning that men do not eat with women, I saw two of my friends eating and talking animatedly with an unknown woman. After she had left, I inquired about

the apparent breach in etiquette, and, with good humor one responded, "But she was our ŋwamu!"

ŋwamu/ŋwamu. This relationship is analogous to zamu/zamu, though it lacks most of the rivalry and long term implication of the latter. Women do not figure prominently in inheritance nor are their roles normally authoritarian, and this reduces much of the strain of the relationship. There is some rivalry, however, based on fear of favoritism, and jealousy. Girls perhaps only reflect the jealousy of their mothers, but they have the reputation of being sensitive to the slighest differentials in behavior toward their wamu. Boys are not immuned to jealousy of this sort, but it is said to be more noticeable among girls, though I could not say that I ever was able to perceive a difference.

In general the relations between ŋwamu are congenial and they grow up as playmates and friends. With marriage they are dispersed and the relationship becomes less important. Occasionally they marry husbands from the same hamlet and under these conditions the relationship is likely to become more important, but normally after marriage they do not see their ŋwamu except when they meet in a market or happen to visit their homes simultaneously. As adults the relationship between zamu/ŋwamu is more important then that between ŋwamu/ŋwamu, for the home continues to be inhabited by zamu who will support and protect his ŋwamu if necessary and who will assume an important role in the lives of her children.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

There are but a few nonpatrilineal relationships within the hamlet which should be discussed in this section.

Mama/Bzər & Nkwa. The major relief from the proprietary concerns of one's hamlet lies in relations with mama. Mama is the source of affection, warmth, and goodness. She can be counted on for support and succor. One informant phrased it in this way: "Well, mama is the tender spot. Of course some mama can really be a kind of executive head too, but they are the ones that children will run to when they cry. A good mother must supply this outlet to the child. Of course, there are different kinds of liking of the two /p̄arents̄/ since mama is more affectionate while the tada is concerned with the growth of this boy or girl. . . . ." In point of fact, the ideal behavior attributed to mama is far more gentle than it seems to be in reality. She is frequently the disciplinarian for petty offenses in the household and she is a principle enculturative agent. The difference between attitudes toward mama and tada are in part based in the difference in the ideal of each, but it is also recognized that mama's disciplinary role is very general and more often through persuasion rather than corporal punishment. Punishment is reserved for breaches in behavioral norms and can be quite severe, though less so from a mama.

The enculturation of nkwa is beyond the concern and capacities of men except for general deportment. Consequently, specific instruction falls to ŋwidu, as we have

seen, and particularly to one's mama. The result is that the relations between nkwa and her mama are more pointed and tense than with anyone else in her lineage. However, in no sense is it comparable to the tada/bzər relationship or even of the tada/nkwa, for the instruction offered by mama is far gentler and lacking in the undertone of rivalry and threat. Inheritance from mama is of little importance, for although some women may accumulate considerable wealth, daughters are only permitted to inherit their personal property such as household goods.

Malada/Bzər & Nkwa. All malada are addressed as ma and general behavior is similar as that towards mama though lacking the closeness of the latter relationship. It is said that a malada will discriminate against bzər and nkwa which are not their own, yet I have known malada who assumed the duties of a true mama when the later died and did it unselfishly.

When malada and bzər are of appropriate age, the relationship is a potential mala/sal (wife/husband) relationship, because of the Margi version of the levirate previously discussed. The behavior between such a pair is very reserved, approaching avoidance; anything less is likely to raise the suspicions and hostility of tada and bzidu, whose wives are also malada. It will be remembered that the ptəlkur or Dluku was founded by an errant son of ptəl Gulagu who had impregnated one of his father's wives. This is yet another pattern which makes the tada/bzər relationship difficult, for older men with younger

wives view their middle aged sons with suspicion. It is an oedipal situation more real and conscious than what is hypothesized in the monogamous families of Europe. Marrying one's father's widow can produce tangles of kinship which even Margi find confusing.

Mwal/Mwal. These terms are only applicable between a male and female. The relations between a man and his zamu's spouse may be characterized as a "joking relationship." There is a great deal of bold teasing carried on by each, women being almost as aggressive as men in the joking. This is in marked contrast to all other types of cross-sex behavior, for even the closeness characteristic of the zamu/ŋamu relationship lacks the rivalry of the relationship between mwal. The joking between mwal is frequently sexual. For example, a young man whose zamu was going on a journey commented to his mwal, "So you will not be having penis for two months." She replied, "I will be no worse than your wives." The answer was a painful reminder that the young man was unmarried although more than old enough. On another occasion the joking between mwal began while her zamu was present. It was so difficult for the latter to hear that he protested and the subject was changed.

The leverate is widely practiced and no mwal/mwal pair is unaware of this fact, however, the probability rather than the possibility of an eventual marriage considerably influences the intensity of the joking relationship. When the female is

much older than the male, the joking--if it occurs at all--will be desultory and lacking for the most part in sexual content.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Dyadic relationships within the patrilineage of mama are characterized in the following pairs.

Iji/Iji. This relationship is quite indulgent. The general flavor with which iji are regarded is more pronounced on the side of mama where there is no proprietary concern at all. It is generally recognized that one regards the children of one's daughter with a special favor, and individuals speak with a special fondness of their maternal iji. It is generally recognized that no small part of the difference in the affective tone between the paternal and maternal iji relationship is due to the fact that the latter only see their young iji on visits rather than in the protracted day to day contact of the patrilocal hamlet. It is also acknowledged that this relationship, for all its warmth and affection, is not a vital one with regard to one's role and position in life.

Psəgu/Psəgu. This relationship characterizes feeling toward mama's kin. The first thing to be noted is the unusual feature of having self-reciprocating terminology in consecutive generations. Self-reciprocating terminology implys equality, a feature usually lacking between adjacent generations. However, the entire nature of relations with mama's kinsmen

is one which lacks this component of authoritarianism. Nor is this unusual; for in many strongly patrilineal societies the unambiguous authority relationships characterized by kinsmen related through one's father are balanced by unambiguously supportive relations from mother's kinsmen. This latter pattern frequently focus upon the mother's brother, for he is the core of mother's patrilineage. Although mother is a part of the pattern, she is also a member of the nuclear family in which relations of authority are inevitable. Her brother is, on the other hand, relieved of all such concerns for his sister's children. For Margi this behavior is the expected pattern and signalled in the self-reciprocating term psəgu.

The relationship is more intimate between the two male psəgu; among them there will be joking and teasing and the younger can get away with many acts which would be unthinkable with any other older man. There is a formal component to this relationship which is lacking--perhaps unnecessarily--in other relationships, in that a younger psəgu has ritual responsibilities at the funeral of his elder psəgu. He acts as the director of the ceremonies, and it is generally understood that the closeness between the two accentuates the loss.

The display of affection between a man and the children of his ŋwamu is quite pronounced. The more so because it is largely lacking in his relationship with his own children, among whom it would be apt to destroy the relationship of

authority and discipline and lead to allegations of favoritism which would not only upset the relations between children but between wives jealous for their own children. On the other hand, no such charges of favoritism may stem from demonstrated affection toward ŋwamu's children. Even should another ŋwamu feel slighted, there are no material consequences so even alleged favoritism is inconsequential. The open display of affection between a man and child is so limited to the psəgu/psəgu relationship that should one see it the genealogical connection is predictable. It was only when I saw a male neighbor lavishing attention upon a small boy that I realized how unusual it was to see a man so behave. Finally, I correctly deduced that the child must be his ŋwamu's and not his own.

There is one qualification to be entered into this otherwise unalloyed picture of affectionate support. That arises when a man decides to leave his own hamlet and make his permanent residence in his psəgu's (his mother's) hamlet. In such a case he is older to begin with and the psəgu/psəgu relationship is far less functional, and the daily requirements of life mitigate the relationship and the result is a more typical neighbor-kinsman bond.

Zamu/Zamu, Zamu/ŋwamu, and Mwal/Mwal. All of these relations are more typical of friends than the kinsmen described in the section on kinship relations within the patrilineage, and a leviratic marriage to a matrilaterally related mwal is virtually impossible. Since visits to the

psəgu's hamlet are largely done in one's youth, mwal are only likely to be present as the wives of very much older zamu, older themselves than the visiting youth, and the entire relationship is thus altered. Otherwise patrilateral zamu of a deceased male and his sons have claims prior to those of matrilaterally related mwal. In general Margi speak of their zamu and ŋwamu in mama's home with the affection reserved for playmates.

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Affinal relationships are markedly different for males and females. The basis for this difference is a consequence of patrilocal residence which requires a woman to interact with her affinal kinsmen much more regularly than a man who usually does not reside with his affinal relatives.

Sulku/Sulku. This is a self-reciprocating term used between parents-in-law and their surrogates and their son-in-law. There is generally an air of restraint in the relations which is explained in terms of the consequences of the negotiations for the bridewealth, bad feelings related to that period of bride service (although this is brief and relatively easy), and anxiety over the course of the marriage. The sulku who are the parents of the wife fear that the marriage may break up before the required number of children have amortized the bridewealth. If the bridewealth has already been dispersed, these sulku are particularly worried that their sulku (son-in-law) may find cause to divorce their

daughter. The husband looks upon his sulku--particularly the father of his wife--as someone quite prepared to steal back his wife and use her again either for additional bridewealth, if the original transaction has been amortized, or for higher bridewealth from another husband. Although these allegations are common, it is difficult to say to what extent these fears are real. Wives do get divorces and return to their tada's compounds, and they do remarry sometimes for higher bridewealth. The role of the father in all this is difficult to assess; none will ever admit to using his daughter in this way, to be sure. On the other hand, I knew a young man who was interested in another man's wife, and he did not hesitate to attempt to curry favor with her father. It is fair to point out, however, that his attempt was rebuffed.

The tension of the sulku/sulku relationship is most conspicuous in the male/male situation. In the cross sex relationship there is merely an attitude of respectful avoidance.

Zama/Zama. This is a double affine; two individuals who have married into the same family. They have much in common though little that really binds them. They are characterized as being potential friends. One informant said, "Some can talk even of the wife that connects them, but he is not as close as family." The cross sex relationship is less important and less likely to lead to any kind of social relationship.

Ghəm/Ghəm. This is a delicate relationship between an individual and the husband of his or her ŋwamu. If they are of a comparable age they may be on good terms, but more often the zamu of the mala, as her protector, is suspisuous of her husband's care and solicitous for her children. If her parents are dead, her brother is treated more like a sulku, for it is he who will arrange for the remarriage and receive the bridewealth.

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Relationships between a woman and her husband's family are frequently warm and happy. They try to make her at home in their hamlet and generally look after her interests. The levirate is best understood as a manifestation of this concern. It is an agreement to honor a contractual obligation after the death of one of the principals. In time, a woman will regard her husband's hamlet as her own and will normally reside there after she is widowed even if she is too old to remarry. By that time what was her husband's hamlet has become her son's.

Ada/ŋwazhili. Apart from a woman's relations with her husband, this relationship is the most important to her marriage. As a young woman, she is likely to move into a hamlet which is dominated by men she refers to as ada. Her relationship with them and particularly the ada who is the tada of her husband is the one which is institutionally pre-

scribed. From the moment that a marriage is arranged for a virgin, she will avoid her prospective ada. In particular she will not speak to him. This continues for about one year or until her tada is able to sponsor a ceremonial feast called mpəlkər (to free one's head) consisting of goat, beni seed, a special mush traditionally served to newlyweds, and beer. This the ŋwazhili and her friends (the more the better) will take to her ada. She will also carry a hen and as she presents it to her ada, she will speak to him for the first time since the marriage was arranged. The ada will send a goat back with the girls to be presented to his wazhili's tada.

After marriage she must always be respectful and modest in his presence. He, in turn, is expected to treat her with kindness and it is said that if she is good he will be even kinder to her than to his own nkwa. In this respect, one should remember that it is she who will continue his line.

Ama/ŋwazhili. These two frequently must work together in close relationship. Ama is supposed to assist her ŋwazhili, yet do it without interferring. Some friction is not unusual, and I found that older women were frequently critical of their ŋwzahili. However, this relationship is not one of hostility in general and is similar to the ada/ŋwazhili relationship without the formality.

Mada/Mada. This is perhaps the most tense of all relationships in the kinship system. The potential hostility of

the tada/bzər relationship is masked in part by the norms of filial respect and proprietary devotion, but between co-wives there is frequently open jealousy and hostility. As young women they are sexually jealous of one another, and as older women they are jealous for their children. It is only among the old wives that friendship is likely to develop. The constant bickering and competition between co-wives is a normal, though not ideal, characteristic of Margi family life. Men recognize it, regret it, but put up with it.

Malbu/Malbu. This is a notoriously close relationship particularly between a young wife and her husband's unmarried ŋwamu. One Margi spoke of the situation in which a man marries a friend of his ŋwamu as being a terrible nuisance because they talked so much. Of course, it must be realized that these women are more likely to be contemporaries with similar interest, nor are they likely to be competing for anything as might be the case between women of the same patrilineage.

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Over the years, I find that anthropological theories come and go; the only thing that endures is ethnography. The only conclusions which stand are those based upon verifiable data. Consequently, I hold field work to be the essential part of social or cultural anthropology. It is our greatest contribution to human understanding.

My field experience has led me to believe that anthropology has never reached a more important conclusion than Edward Sapir's succinct statement, **"The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds not the same world with different labels attached."** I truly wish that I had required every student I taught to memorize that line (and yes, I know that memorization is a "bad thing.")

If the leaders of the world knew and understood that statement the world would be a safer and better place.

2006
Bloomington, Indiana

Ptil Yarkur & his mbari
(his royal verge)